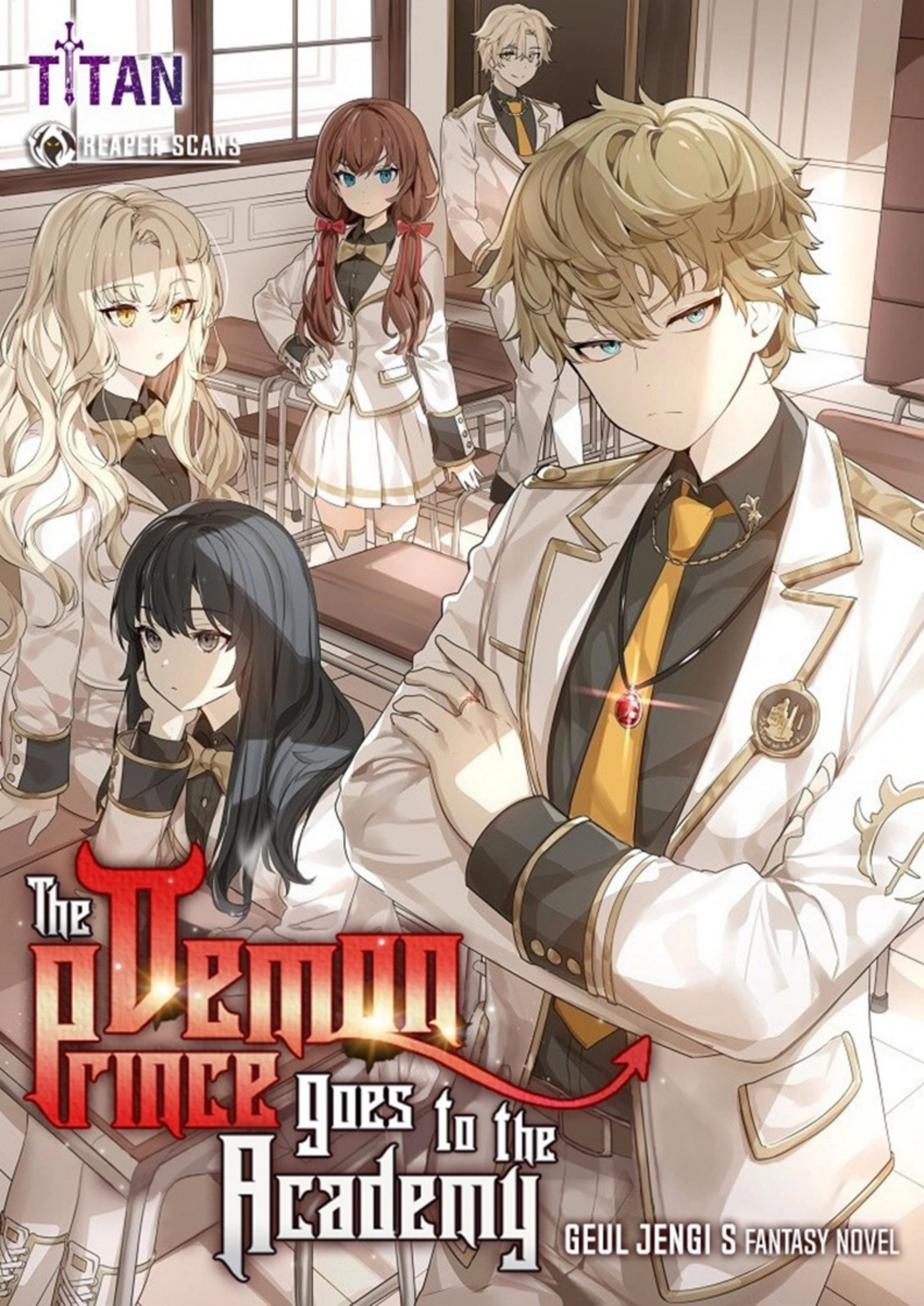
TITAN
REAPER SCANS
The Demon Prince goes to the Academy
GEUL JENGI S FANTASY NOVEL

THE DEMON PRINCE GOES TO THE ACADEMY

–마왕은 학원에 간다 –

- VOLUME 2 -

-AUTHOR-

Geul Jengi S

-ILLUSTRATOR-

RONOPU

[REAPER SCANS]

CHAPTER 51

Harriet began to cry.

I could deal with bullies, but I came to realize that I had no idea how to handle a crying kid.

I brought Harriet, who was crying in the hallway, to the dining hall and handed her some macaroons I had on me.

Wha, what.

The way I try to appease a crying child seemed kind of like something an old man would do, so I felt rather embarrassed.

“I won’t eat things you give me! They’re dirty!”

“They aren’t mine, the seniors gave me those, you know?”

“You touched them! So they are dirty! Throw them away, get them away, I won’t eat them!”

Harriet was crying bitterly. What should I do, what should I do. This was like a grandfather who teased his grandkids too much because they were just too cute and accidentally made them cry. It was so much fun. Although it is true that I bullied her a bit too much.

It was like how old people would pinch a kid’s cheek for just being cute.

I was obviously in the wrong. Ah.

I was the one at fault here.

“Come on… I’m sorry. Hey? My bad. Okay, I apologized. Don’t cry anymore. Okay?”

“Shut up! You’re always making fun of me, tease me, and bully me! No one ever did that to me. Not even my father, mother, and older brothers told me things like that, so

why are you doing this to me when I didn't do anything to you?!"

-Sobsob!

I sighed as I watched Harriet continue to cry.

"Hey, you made fun of me for being a beggar as well."

"You're a beggar, aren't you?! So why are you teasing me for calling a beggar, a beggar?!"

Ah, I shouldn't poke at her more. If I said something like "I called you an idiot because you're actually an idiot" it would just make her cry even more, so I kept my mouth shut.

Ah, right.

I remembered a different method.

"No, it's not that I just teased you for no reason. I told you, you're cute, right?"

"Sobsob… Sniff？"

I got a reaction from that. She looked at me as if I was talking nonsense.

Yes, it was true that she was hard to deal with but she was also pretty cute sometimes.

"Think about it. I never called you an asshole or anything, or did I? I just said you were cute. Calling someone cute is a compliment, so how was I teasing you? You called me a beggar, and yet I called you cute. When did I make fun of you? Huh? Wasn't it you who made fun of me? Is calling you cute, teasing you?"

"You squeezed my cheeks and laughed at me!"

"No, I just thought you'd look cuter if I did that. It was really cute, you know? Huh?"

"……Hiccup!"

She stared at me while hiccupping. She seemed to be deep in thoughts. I wanted to

say a few more things as followed:

"*Aren't you revealing your status just by saying that a low-class kid like me isn't allow to touch your body? Aren't we classmates? Huh? I don't know about after our graduation, but right at this moment we both are simply Temple students. We're the same, right?*"

I was about to say that, but that girl was murmuring something. If someone like her told me something like that, she was sure to get into trouble with the teachers.

She thought for a while and then stared at me.

"……Don't touch me with those dirty hands again."

That was what she eventually mumbled quietly. Was she feeling better now?

"Okay. My bad. I'm really sorry. Now eat this and let it go. Hm?"

Her expression seemed to change a little as I kept the apologies going.

A bully who seemed like he'd never apologize for anything, was doing so at the moment, so her attitude seemed to change a little.

I mean, if someone like her came out like that, wasn't apologizing the right thing to do? That's how I felt at least.

"Here, I've never tried them, but they should taste good. Eat."

She seemed to be uncomfortable as I kept pushing the macarons towards her.

"Ah… Ah. I don't… I don't want to… Fine. I'll eat them! I'm eating them! You are like my grandmother! How annoying!"

In the end, Harriet took the macarons and groaned as if she had no other choice but to eat them.

Ah.

I really did seem like an old man. What? I wasn't actually that old, but I really didn't know any other way to soothe crying children…

So I really was too old!

“Earlier…”

After eating the macarons, she talked without looking at me.

“Huh, earlier?”

“Didn’t it hurt when you got hit?”

“It hurt like hell.”

I recovered, but it really hurt horribly. Of course it would hurt if one were to get hit. Why was she asking something like that?

“Why did you continue to fight if it hurt that much? Why didn’t you just surrender? If you weren’t lucky enough to awaken your supernatural powers just then, you wouldn’t have been able to win.”

“That’s right.”

“So why didn’t you surrender? You said it hurt.”

Harriet didn’t seem to understand why I kept getting up just to get beaten again and again. Of course, I kept fighting because I knew I had supernatural powers.

“Well, have you ever felt like you absolutely didn’t want to lose to some kind of bastard even if it killed you?”

“……?”

“He was that kind of bastard to me.”

He took over someone else’s duel with the excuse of wanting to educate his juniors, and even though his opponent was just a first year, he went on to beat him to a pulp no matter the consequences. It was neither honorable nor admirable.

I just didn’t want to lose to that kind of bastard.

That was the type of feeling I was going for. It was both similar to the truth and yet

slightly different. Harriet pondered for a while, then smirked and spoke up.

“You’re going to die an early death.”

“I’m not dead yet though.”

It was now time for her to let out a “Hmph!” again to my bizarre answer.

“……Actually.”

Harriet, who had been munching away on the macarons for some time now, didn’t give me the response I expected.

“You were a litte…”

A little what?

“A little……”

Harriet, who had been mumbling to herself for a bit, suddenly rose from her seat.

“Hmph! I don’t know, you idiot!”

And after adding another “Hmph!” to her sentence, she quickly disappeared from my view.

Right.

Sometimes having such an easy-to-see-through character was good as well.

* * *

Just because I won that duel, didn’t mean things were over. My supernatural ability was still in its initial stage and I needed to get used to applying it to me. Self-Suggestion was just the starting line, my real goal was Word Magic.

So I headed back to the gym. Arriving there, I found the NPCs that usually appeared here. Cliffman and Ellen.

I hadn’t spoken to Cliffman yet, but I was familiar with him, because I always met

him here in the gym.

Ellen was swinging her sword, but stopped when she saw me. I wondered if she had something to say to me, but she just stared at me.

Should I brag about my victory? Or should I thank her for offering to be my champion? I was thinking about what I should tell her…

Ellen pointed with her chin to something.

It was a basket filled with training swords.

“That’s not how you should fight.”

No.

Was she preparing for another lesson?

Still, now wasn’t the time to ask to be congratulated on my victory, brag about my supernatural ability or thank her for the training.

No matter what happened, she would always stay the same, so my slightly scrambled mind calmed down. I won, but I felt more like I had just reaffirmed that I still had a long way to go.

Alright.

It was still a long road ahead.

I grinned while grabbing a training sword.

“Hey, it’s going to be different from now on.”

Like hell.

I got severly beaten up.

* * *

Monday.

I didn't stop my training.

I woke up early and did some strength training with Adriana. She also declared that she would no longer assist me with her divine power anymore as there was no urgency in my strength gain.

That was when I realized how nice exercising was with her assistance. I felt like dying.

After that, my routine was the same as before. I made some food with Ellen and ate a bit before breakfast, then ate breakfast and went to class.

I didn't get any more divine power recharges, so I didn't really need to eat that much anymore, but I was exercising quite a bit, so I decided to keep eating a little something in between meals, albeit not as much as before.

Ellen was still chasing me around the gym, maybe a bit more than before, while I was a bit more timid in taking my revenge in the dining room.

"Wow."

Bertus, who returned to Temple and went straight to the classroom on Monday, was very surprised when he heard about the duel's outcome from the other students. The one who explained the whole situation to him was none other than Cayer.

"Reinhardt, isn't that incredible?"

As soon as Bertus heard his explanation, he turned to me.

"Ah, well."

"Although it was said that you had infinite aptitudes, for supernatural powers to actually be included in that."

As if apologizing for underestimating my potential, Bertus smiled softly. Among those who felt rather uncomfortable that I was able to awaken a supernatural power, the one who felt the most uncomfortable was Heinrich von Schwarz, who once threatened to grill me with his power.

He was trying hard to not look my way, as if he didn't acknowledge me, who had

awakened a supernatural power in such a ridiculous way.

“H, honestly though, he was just quite lucky…”

Cayer muttered timidly next to Bertus, but Bertus just dismissed him.

“I see? I find it more amazing that he kept on fighting in the state he was in than his supernatural power though.”

“I, is that so…”

Cayer first told him that I was being crushed thoroughly before suddenly awakening my ability and winning the duel. In the end, he just described me as some lucky guy.

However, Bertus seemed to give higher value to the fact that I kept on fighting while being helpless than me winning with my supernatural power.

Bertus wasn’t particularly interested in the Royal Class’ talents to begin with. Even if they were outstanding, in the end, they were just kids. So, while he was surprised that I managed to awaken my ability, he was actually impressed by the fact that I kept on getting up even though I was completely crushed by that third year again and again.

He had more interest in intelligence and mental strength, than talent and brawn.

He knew that no matter how great the skill one owned is, it would be useless if one didn’t have the brains to use it, and even if one was intelligent enough, it would be even more useless if one didn’t have the mental fortitude to face the dangers in front of oneself.

Wait, wasn’t I getting better and better in his eyes? Erm, one second? Was I getting brainwashed here? Wasn’t it pretty problematic getting this much attention from this two-faced character I made? Wouldn’t I be an actual fool if I got deceived while knowing he would deceive me?

How could I, the creator, get led on by my own creation? Was I that pathetic?

Just when I was about to fall into a delirium.

-Clatter!

Someone opened the door and entered the classroom.

It was Art de Gartis, who was the actual other party of the duel.

He came to the same place where he applied for this duel, although, this time, as the loser of said duel. Of course, his expression also seemed rather lifeless. Everyone watched the situation in silence as he approached me and bowed his head.

“I have lost the duel, so I will admit my faults, Reinhardt. In the future, I will not take any actions that would involve unreasonable demands or verbal abuse towards my juniors. I’m sorry. I deeply regret my wrongdoings.”

“……”

Seeing him apologize, I couldn’t help but feel exasperated.

A champion was just a champion after all. The price of losing a duel was not directed at the champion, so there was no need for them to pay said price.

That was why Mayarton, who actually trampled on me, didn’t come to apologize to me, because he was just a champion after all.

He should have come out of moral reasons, but he didn’t because of his stupid pride. He probably complained to Art about how he had no reason to go. Or maybe he couldn’t even ask him to come.

“Yeah. That’s enough.”

“I’m sorry.”

Art, who raised his head, looked at me and apologized again.

His expression held a plethora of very complex emotions.

He was forced to choose a champion because he was unable to overcome the pressure of his seniors and then he came here alone without bringing Mayarton with him. He seemed to feel guilty about all these things.

Just as Adriana and Redina said, Art wasn’t such a bad guy.

From what I could tell, Redina probably was someone who was loved by all her second-year classmates. I could only imagine how hard it must have been for her to be forced by her seniors to go educate the juniors.

Obviously, the third years must have ordered her to go alone. They must have chosen Redina on purpose, knowing that she wasn't able to say any hurtful things to anyone. So this was nothing more than bullying.

Eventually, she went to do this alone with sorrow in her heart, having to do something, she absolutely hated, but came back after getting severely insulted by a first year student. I was the one who was so harsh to her.

From Art's point of view, this would have been enough for him to see red. I fully understood. After all, they were just kids. I had already shown plenty of ugly anger and ridicule towards these children, but I didn't want to stoop to the level of an idiot who would seriously hate those kids. Guys like Mayarton were seriously disgusting, though.

Art deserved to be angry.

I didn't really handle this too well, but I wanted to make it up to them somehow. I had done a lot of bad things to them as well after all.

"I understand. I've done a lot of bad things as well. I'm sorry, senior."

Everyone, including Art, was astonished at my words. Art looked at me for a while, before he opened his mouth with much difficulty.

"When I saw you persevering like that, I realized how shameful I was."

An incompetent and ignorant guy like me was able to stand his ground and fought against a senior, while he couldn't overcome his own senior's unreasonable demands and had to give up his duel spot to one of them. And in the end, he had to watch me win.

Did he realize that it may take power to overcome injustice, but simply standing up to it, didn't? He seemed to regret not being able to stand up to this injustice in the end.

After saying that, Art went back.

I felt compelled to apologize to Redina as well later.

Not long after, Mr. Epinhauser entered the classroom.

“You all should know that there will be a certain event starting next Monday, right?”

-Yes!

It had finally come.

The main event of the beginning part. The Victory Festival.

CHAPTER 52

The Victory Festival began after the triumphal army, who returned from their long journey after winning the Demon World War, entered the capital.

If they actually marched all the way back from there, it would have taken a lot longer, but the time actually got reduced as they used super-large warp gates located at the outpost on the borders of the Darklands. I was in Temple right now so I wasn't too sure, but they must be pretty busy preparing for the return of triumphal army.

Of course, I didn't describe every single day of their Academy life in huge detail. If I did, this would be more like a fantasy-style diary. Would that even be a novel then? I roughly wrote down when and what happened, but I mostly just put it as: "Each day passed like a flicker until it was time for the Victory Festival". That was how I wrote it.

Up until now, I lived in these blank times and went through all sorts of events that didn't happen in my novel, but still existed in this world, so now it was time for the Victory Festival.

"Originally, Temple was supposed to close down for the duration of the Festival, but this is not applicable to you guys. As you know, Temple's tuition fee is quite high. So, if the school were to close down for more than a month, not only would that disrupt the flow of education, but there would be various complaints from students as well."

Did they think there was a single student who'd hate some vacation time? It was the parents who'd hand their asses to them.

If the school, one spent a huge amount of money on, decided to close down for a month, they would have paid that tuition for nothing.

And strictly speaking, I was kind of on the side of the parents, so I could sympathize. If Temple just decided to close its doors for a whole month, I'd think they were thieves as well.

"Siiiiiiiiiiiiiigh…"

The kids, especially the ones who liked to play like No. 8 Kono Lint, let out a deep sigh. Regardless whether they were part of Royal Class or not, they were just like any other kid. Everyone would get a little excited when they heard news about the school closing down for a month, so I could see everyone's mood literally dropping to the floor.

Hey, you little bastards. Listen to what people have to say until the end.

"Nevertheless, the victory in the Demon World War is the most memorable of all events written down in the history of mankind. Therefore, Temple will be closed for about one week, which is already unusual enough."

They couldn't give us a month off, but they decided to close Temple for a whole week.

"Oooooh!"

Mr. Epinhauser's calm words heated up the atmosphere again.

Bertus didn't seem to be so enthused about this. As a member of the Imperial Family, he'd have a lot of work to do during this huge festival serving as a Victory Ceremony. Rather it might be quicker than one might thought though.

However, among my classmates, Ellen's mood seemed rather subdued. She didn't seem much different from usual, but now after I gained more experience with the stone Buddha, I could somewhat read her current mood.

The reason was obvious.

To Ellen this Victory Festival would just be something to commemorate the death of her older brother, who eventually died fighting the Demon King.

"Ooooh, hell yeeeeeaaaaah!"

Of course, Kono Lint kicked up a fuss after hearing Mr. Epinhauser's words. Dismissing that rowdy guy, Mr. Epinhauser delivered an additional message to us.

"That would mean that you have to leave this Friday and come back two weeks later on Monday. If you want to return to your parents' house, please report to me. I will give you permission."

No matter how talented they were, there were some among the kids who were actually homesick. Given that it was a nearly 10-day-long break, those that live further away would be able to return home.

Some of the children's eyes lit up at these words.

"Don't get too excited. The break will start next week, so please attend class properly."

What he meant was: "Don't think about causing any trouble just because you're excited". Everyone would get slightly excited about the prospects of a break. No matter how problematic they were, in the end they were all just children. Looking at them like that, they were all pretty cute.

And out of all of them who seemed to be the most problematic?

"He, he, he…"

Ten days. I wasn't going to let anyone keep watching me.

I was going to go back to Eleris after such a long time.

It had been just too long since I last saw Eleris.

I could sympathize with the parents, but right now I was just a student. A break was nice after all.

"Number 11."

Then Mr. Epinhauser called me.

"Yes?"

Now, just by him calling me, I could feel a chill running down my spine. Wha, what else did I do wrong? No, but didn't he accept my apology?

Worrying about what I did wrong before knowing what the teacher actually wanted was a typical problem child's way of thinking, so I felt pretty pathetic about myself.

Yeah well.

Wasn't I more or less already a super-delinquent who even beat his senior in a fight?

"You are excused from class today. Come with me."

……Did I really cause some trouble?

* * *

Fortunately, I didn't actually cause any trouble.

It seemed like I already passed the point of no return when I started worrying about what I might have done wrong without actually remembering having done anything wrong.

Mr. Epinhauser took me to the outdoor swimming pool of our class building.

"He'll be here soon."

He sat there with me on a nearby bench and waited, although the teacher didn't tell me who we were waiting for.

There was no water in the outdoor pool. The weather was still too cold after all.

Swimming lessons were also part of the P.E. classes, however not until summer.

Come to think of it, this set-up was rather weird.

If one used a mana stone powered water heating system in an indoor pool, we'd be able to have swimming lessons, even in winter, right? However, here in Temple, which recieved huge amounts of capuital, we still depended on the weather whether we would have swimming lessons or not?

This was a set-up hole which stemmed from my weird delusion that swimming lessons were a summer thing in school.

……I should have thought about that a little more. Wouldn't I end up in a much worse situation, because I set up so many improbable things? I'm an idiot.

No, now I got curious again.

This was obviously a weird situation. It was clear that mana stone powered water heating systems were a known concept as there were shower facilities in which one could shower with hot water.

However, I was stupid and created this bizarre situation of hot showers existing but no indoor pools. This world created some sort of probability for parts I did not include, but this strange part wasn't corrected. That was because I, the author, explicitly wrote that.

I wrote that Temple didn't have swimming lessons outside of summer, so it was as such.

However, this world had the technology to make indoor swimming pools and a way to provide hot water, so one was able to swim in winter.

It was already unlikely enough that Temple, which swam in money, didn't have an indoor swimming pool, but as I, a braindead, second-rate author, wrote it like that, this was now the reality I was confronted with.

One could say that it was just a swimming pool so I shouldn't care, but I was about to go crazy, because I kept on thinking that this unpredictable situation happened because of me. It felt like my dark history was being played out before me in real time.

That was what I was curious about.

What would otherwise not have been possible had become reality because of my description, but did this situation also get its plausibility supplemented?

Did a plausible explanation get added to this highly improbable situation that my setting error created?

"Teacher."

"Speak."

I didn't know why, but I felt like the teacher might know. Although not enough for the setting to collapse, it was definitely lacking. Was there any convincing reason for this?

“It’s possible to take hot showers in Temple, so wouldn’t it be possible to have swimming lessons in winter if we build an indoor pool and fill it with hot water?”

Were there any other writers who’d asked their own characters about their own novel’s settings like this?

No matter how hard I thought about it, this was just completely different from your usual ‘Getting Transported into your own Novel’ kind of deal. Usually, the main characters in these types of stories were the writers of the novel they got transported into and they were able to remember every detail of their own settings or they were readers who read the novel and knew absolutely everything about the book.

While I got sent into that novel I only vaguely wrote, and rather than knowing everything, I, the writer, went in with nearly no knowledge. Among the things I should know were even a lot of things I didn’t even remember.

Knowing the future in a slice-of-life novel had no merit whatsoever, in the first place! What was the point of knowing what Ludwig and Delphine Izadra chatted about over dinner? Then they got all excited, gathered all their friends and had a snack party. How could I even use that?!

There weren’t that many military incidents in a slice-of-life, so even if the writer entered, there wasn’t much he could do… Of course, I knew about the gates, but that was a rather disgraceful thing to remember.

So, for the parts that were not described, rather than the creator just knowing, it would be faster to ask one of their creations about the situation unfolding before them.

As soon as I arrived at the main stage, the Capital, I wondered just where the hell I landed. I couldn’t even recognize a lot of things that appeared because of my writing.

Phew.

If the creation myth was true, God might have watched the humans making airplanes, wondering what they were supposed to be. He might have thought something like: “What the hell? You’re not made to fly!”. This was already far beyond the scope of my imagination.

Anyway.

“I suppose so.”

The teacher answered that the possibility of a heated pool existing was there.

“But why don’t we have one here?”

It wasn’t like Temple had no money and having one wouldn’t be disadvantageous. Mr. Epinhauser just stared at me. What was the matter? Why was he staring at me like that?

“Temple’s water supply is incomparable even to other cities. However, maintaining a large swimming pool all year round at every single educational facility would be rather costly. There’s also the issue with the water use itself.”

So the reason was made out to be a problem with the water supply, huh? Obviously, installing and maintaining indoor pools in all of Temple’s many schools would cost a lot of money…

I wondered if only the Royal Class could maybe have an indoor pool, but it didn’t seem to have been implemented.

“So, Temple’s swimming pools do not draw water from said water supply, but use rainwater collected in summer, a time when it rains frequently. Magic is used to purify the water.”

Swimming lessons were held in summer because of the lacking water supply, not because of the weather or temperature. Perhaps there was a water reservoir designated to collect rainwater for the swimming pools. It probably didn’t directly get collected in the outdoor swimming pool.

I hadn’t set up where the water supply was supposed to be or from which source it drew water, but I thought it was taken from the Irine river, in other words, from the Han River. It would be possible to maintain a swimming pool with that water.

However, I had a feeling that there would be water usage problems. There were several schools at Temple and if they all kept on changing the pools’ water, other places might just get a few drops. It wasn’t about the total amount of water available, but the usage of said water.

Anyway, although the Capital was similar to Seoul, it didn't have its water supply facilities.

There would also be huge costs to use that gigantic amount of water. It wasn't like we could draw the water directly from the river, after all.

It was also unreasonable to create water using ice or water magic. The amount they had to summon would be enormous.

Anyway, they just used rainwater. To purify it they either used magic tools or purification magic.

"Then why don't we keep on purifying the water even in winter?"

"No matter how much one were to use purification magic on it, if you were to swim in the same water all year round, you wouldn't want to step into that water anymore."

"Ah, I see."

Yeah, that was true. Regardless of whether it was harmless or not, it would be rather disgusting. So, in the end, it was possible to heat up the water with mana stones, but the reason for not having swimming lessons in winter wasn't about the fact that it was cold, but that it didn't rain. And indoor pools didn't exist, because they could gather a bit more rain water with outdoor ones to save money. If it didn't rain, the pool couldn't be filled with water, so we had to use the water from the water supply. Mr. Epinhauser said that process would be expensive, but he didn't say it was impossible to operate such a swimming pool with the Imperial Capital's water supply.

One way or another, the amount of water used was a problem and Temple was looking to save their money.

Anyway.

There definitely was a reason for every strange thing I set up.

Who was it? Who was the guy who worked his brain instead of me? It made me want to go to that person and bow to them.

“Why are you curious about that?”

Mr. Epinhauser posed a question back at me, as if he didn’t understand my sudden curiosity.

I just wanted to verify how that person cleaned my ass for me.

I couldn’t possibly tell him that.

“Ah, well… I was just curious. Why was the swimming pool outside? Why couldn’t we have swimming lessons in winter? That kind of stuff.”

“Do you want to have swimming lessons in the winter, is that why?”

“What? Ah, sure… That would be good.”

Why were you asking me that, dude? Mr Epinhauser looked at me silently, then turned his head.

“…Yes, you don’t seem to have any impure intentions.”

“…Impure intentions?”

Why would I have impure intentions asking for swimming lessons to be held in the winter?

Ah.

No way.

“Teacher, did you think I was asking something like that because I wanted to see my female classmates in their swimsuits?”

You punk. That was 100% what he thought.

When he was staring at me earlier, he probably wanted to check if my eyes held any sort of lust in them. He let it go because that didn’t seem to be the case.

Mr. Epinhauser avoided my gaze at my straight forward remark.

Was that guy flustered right now?

“Teacher, I admit that I’m a problem child, but I’m definitely not that kind of guy. I’m as innocent as can be.”

Okay!

I’m from a completely different race! I like women like Eleris! Yeah!

No. Wouldn’t that actually be even more problematic in this worldview. If demons and among them the undead were my preference, wouldn’t I get hanged or something, no matter how much they are similar to humans. Would I be a necrophiliac then? But I was a demon as well, so there was no problem with that, right?

Weren’t the undead also demons?

Come to think of it, I didn’t even know where the demons originated from.

“The moment I cast such doubt on a student, I as a teacher would be more… Ehem.”

“……”

Do you know what your eyes look like, you punk?

I was only thinking about a set-up error!

…The moment I decided on that setting I probably thought something like“Swimming has to be done in summer★!” Or something like that… I knew that I wasn’t exactly a clean guy. But I wasn’t thinking about that! At least not now!

Mr. Epinhauser didn’t even directly respond to my words, as if he had nothing to say about this.

He still had his poker face on, but his internal embarrassment was apparent. Yes, he was human too, after all.

He had to be human.

“Well, she’s here. Listen well to the class.”

After seeing someone coming from afar, Mr. Epinhauser fled from this place. It felt like he was actually running away. Did that punk really do that?

Still, seeing Mr. Epinhauser panic like that made me feel content. He wasn't such a scary person after all.

……I knew, because I set up his character like that in the first place, but it was kind of funny poking at that person and see them embarrassed. I also knew that he wasn't a really bad person.

By the way, what did he mean with: "listen well to the class"?

What kind of class was this, for me to have to skip all of Monday's classes?

When I saw the person who was approaching me, I instantly knew what kind of class it would be.

It was a teacher in charge of the supernatural power classes of the first years in Royal Class.

The same person that asked me why I was taking supernatural power classes even though I had no supernatural power.

It was Ms. Rollendria.

CHAPTER 53

At the outdoor pool, Ms. Rollendria couldn't hide her surprise when she saw me there.

"This is the first time I have ever experienced something like that."

"This would be my first time as well."

If not, I would have had to have awakened a supernatural power twice in my life. At my remark, Ms. Rollendria sighed.

"I can't believe the boy that came to my class with no talent at all awakened a supernatural ability in a matter of weeks…"

Of course, considering that such cases were rather rare, this was quite the bizarre situation. The guy who tried to take every lesson actually managed to get something out of it. That teacher probably thought I'd end up failing.

"Today is more like an inspection than a lecture, Reinhardt."

"Inspection?"

"Yeah."

Supernatural powers were handled with great care. Since it was a type of power that science couldn't properly grasp yet, I would have to go through a certain process to get my abilities accurately judged. Those whose abilities were too overwhelmingly dangerous or uncontrollable are sometimes secretly disposed of.

So, although I figured out how to use this supernatural power that I awakened yesterday, Temple needed to know specifically what kind of power I held, so that they could decide whether they could keep me here or not.

They left me alone on Sunday, but as soon as Monday's regular classes started, they exempt me from them.

They urgently needed to judge my abilities. I wouldn't be able to return to class before it wasn't fully determined that I could control my supernatural powers and what kind of power it was.

My Self-Suggestion wasn't really a dangerous power at this stage.

While I was passed out, they probably checked my physical condition, and as a result, they found out that I awakened a supernatural power.

A supernatural power with the name Self-Suggestion.

If the name of my ability was something like World Destruction, they probably wouldn't think twice about what to do with me.

Anyway, it wasn't like I had that supernatural power, so it should be alright.

Ms. Rollendria was sitting next to me, reading the report on my ability. She must have already figured out what kind of ability it was.

The reason why they decided to use the outdoor swimming pool as the test site was probably because there were few people here and a spacious area was needed.

"According to the report, in a duel with an upperclassman named Mayarton, your physical abilities seemed to have suddenly risen dramatically after struggling for a while. Correct?"

"Yes."

Mr. Epinhauser probably wrote that report. He would have been able to give the most accurate recount of the duel.

"What exactly happened?"

"At first I felt completely exhausted and I couldn't even move properly because of all the pain. Then I suddenly felt like my body was filled with strength again and I was able to see Mayarton's movements that I shouldn't be able to see. And with it came the physical abilities to counter his attacks."

"Hmm… Okay. However, if that's how it happened, then why is it called 'Self-Suggestion' when what you felt is 'Body Strengthening'……? Maybe what you said

during the duel was the trigger."

Mr. Epinhauser's report was very detailed. He must have included the words I said as well.

I'm going to beat you anyway.

There was no reason to hide my abilities anyway. If my supernatural power was written as Word Magic, maybe, but not at its current stage. It was only similar to body strengthening.

"I was placed in a pretty unfair situation, and as it is written there, I was helplessly getting beat up."

"Okay."

Ms. Rollendria nodded her head as she had already confirmed my statement by reading through the duel report.

"I was really angry and resentful, so I thought I wanted to absolutely win. It even went beyond the level of just wanting to. I suddenly though I'd obviously win."

"……Huh?"

Ms. Rollendria tilted her head as if wondering what I meant by that. It wasn't that I simply wanted to win in a situation where I practically already lost, but that I was completely convinced that I was going to win.

Of course, I was under extreme psychological pressure, but I even realized how to use my ability. However, the teacher probably wouldn't understand the meaning of those words.

Let's change the wording a bit.

"I thought that I, of course, had to win. I couldn't just lose to a guy like that. So that piece of trash would never be able to beat me. I would absolutely win. That's what I thought."

Anyway, I won.

I just couldn't lose to someone like that. That's what I told her. I simply believed that it just shouldn't be like that.

"And that's what happened."

"Huh…"

Teacher Rollendria didn't seem to understand.

I couldn't afford to lose to that guy.

I believed so strongly that I wouldn't lose that eventually my ability, Self-Suggestion, awakened. It was an ability that somewhat worked like hypnotizing myself.

I would win for sure.

It was a power that would only activate if one absolutely believed in something.

"Yeah, well, no one is too sure why supernatural abilities appear, neither its process nor its reason for awakening, so this might have been the trigger in your case."

Supernatural powers couldn't be explained. That also gave me an advantage.

Because of that one sentence, no matter how one awakened their abilities, it could be explained away. It would be suspicious if I were suddenly able to use high-level magic. I had never learned anything about it, so I shouldn't have had any knowledge about it.

However, it was possible for me to suddenly be able to use supernatural abilities. It was a power with unknown principles after all.

That was why, even if Ms. Rollendria found it strange, she wouldn't find me suspicious. There was also the premise of my 'infinite aptitudes'. That was enough to justify most powers I might obtain.

"Then… Self-suggestion could be judged to be a kind of power that strengthens one's body under the premise that one alludes oneself to have that power. That should be it."

"Maybe… I think so."

I shouldn't have much knowledge about my own ability yet, so I only answered vaguely.

"However… It really is a very unique supernatural power. It's not intuitive at all."

It really wasn't. Supernatural powers like Fire, Electricity, Teleportation and Telepathy were intuitive, because they were abilities that could be described in a single sentence.

Self-Suggestion on the other hand was a bizarre ability one couldn't judge the limits of. That was why I didn't actually include it in the novel. It was such a pain to have a vague ability like that on someone who wasn't even the main character.

"So the first manifestation was physical reinforcement, but it might not end there. Let's say you were to strongly suggest something to yourself and you completely believed in it, your powers would manifest."

"Yes."

"Then let's say you strongly believe that your own body becomes water. Would you become water then?"

No, is that woman crazy?

Regardless of whether that was possible or not, what if something happened to me in that state?!

"Teacher, if I really became water, there's a good chance I won't be able to turn back. In that case, would that count as suicide or murder?"

The teacher jumped at my specific question.

"It was just a hypothetical. I didn't tell you to actually do, you punk."

Ms. Rollendria more or less told me not to misunderstand, and fell back into her thoughts again. Initially, the curriculum of the supernatural power classes included controlling, developing and enhancing supernatural powers. However, because the teacher didn't exactly know how to test my powers, she was having some difficulties as well.

As she pondered, her expression eventually hardened.

“Reinhardt, your powers might be very dangerous.”

What?

“If what you absolutely believe in became realtiy, even if it only applied to yourself, wouldn’t it be very dangerous?”

“Well…?”

It was true that it would become rather dangerous later, but right now I wouldn’t say this power held that much danger.

“If you believe yourself to be god, you might actually become god, right?”

Shit.

She was damn creative.

“I don’t think that’s gonna happen though…”

“But still… We don’t know the limits of your ability yet…”

I knew that it wasn’t such a crazy ability.

“Hmm… Hmmmm…”

However, Ms. Rollendria began to deeply ponder about what could happen if my vague ability were abused.

This was a pretty weird situation, but that misunderstanding was actually pretty dangerous for me.

Even if it only applied to myself, if all the beliefs I held about myself became true, it might appear that my ability wasn’t any different from World Destruction.

Apart from its actual practical use, this line of thinking was indeed pretty logical making my ability seem dangerous.

“Teacher, I don’t think that my power would be capable of something as crazy as that. In the first place I’m not that delusional. How could I end up believing that I’m god?”

No.

Not believing that would actually be weirder, wouldn’t it?

I was this whole world’s creator.

I wasn’t a god, but something even above a god.

I even named this place’s gods, ya hear?

This wasn’t about believing it or not, it was actually true.

Before Ms. Rollendria it would be the same though, whether I believed to be a god or the creator. But I actually was the creator! However, this world’s creator was a pathetic one! So even if I used my ability, nothing would change!

Creator’s special ability) *Dying from too high blood pressure after reading malicious comments.*

Could one find an even more absurd situation than this?

Ms. Rollendria wrinkled her forehead hearing my defense that I wasn’t a megalomaniac.

“We, well, you’re already past that age, so it should be fine…”

What age? What did she mean?

“Well, you know? Sometimes there are some second year middle school kids who believe they are gods… Seriously…… And if it isn’t gods it’s some great evil beings… There was one who thought he was a dragon who lost his memories… It’s surprisingly common.”

Ah.

She was talking about the 8th grade syndrome!

“There are some teenagers who have these kinds of believes, but… If someone with your ability came to really believe in such things… Maybe that would cause a different set of problems… Something like that.”

Ms. Rollendria was imagning that the world might collapse if I were to ever be affected by the 8th grade syndrome.

Actually, when I was in my second year of middle school, I had a pretty bad case of it, but not anymore! Seriously!

I did give myself nicknames like envoy of something, something, but that was in the past! I didn’t do these kinds of things anymore!

From your point of view, I might just have graduated from middle school, but it’s been more than 20 years since I sat foot in it!

I suddenly remembered part of my black history, which made me cringe.

* * *

So even in this world, in this place so similar to Seoul, existed this thing called 8th grade syndrome. Ms. Rollendria said that there were kids like that, but they were different from me.

No, but I was actually a god. Even if I “believed” to be a god, nothing would happen. I would just stay the same as before.

Eventually, she started the actual testing. About the limits of my ability.

We climbed down the ladder to the pool. The pool was about 2.5 meters deep.

-Tak!

As soon as Ms. Rollendria moved her finger, a stone the size of a baseball was summoned out of thin air. It was only natural that Ms. Rollendira, who had to be able to stop supernatural power users when their power went out of control, was a high-ranking wizard.

“Now, this is a stone.”

“Yes, it’s a stone.”

What was she trying to achieve by showing me that big stone?

“Try to self-suggest yourself that you’re able to crush this stone with your hand.”

Well.

Crushing a stone with my hand.

“At times like these wouldn’t we start with something like an apple and then slowly up the difficulty?”

Right. One should first start with something easy before moving on to something harder.

“You shouldn’t play with your food, you know?”

The teacher just bluntly cut me off and that she wouldn’t accept any excuses. Anyway, I just grabbed the stone.

Believe it.

My grip is strong enough to crush rocks.

I sincerely believe that I can do that.

Ms. Rollendria looked at me with intrigue.

“Huup!”

Nothing happened.

CHAPTER 54

Supernatural powers didn't have that good of a performance in its lower levels. That was why Heinrich's Pyrokinesis was the way it is.

When it just awakened it was in a type of berserk state, so it exerted a lot of power, but now that it was in a stable state, it didn't really do much.

"Did you feel your grip becoming stronger?"

"I think so. My palms are tingling."

In fact, I clearly felt that my grip strength itself increased. If I just tried to crush it with my will power alone, my palms wouldn't hurt to the point that I was about to faint.

"Well, then try to run to the other end of the swimming pool. Run at full speed."

"Eh."

Perhaps because it was determined that my power could enhance my physical capabilities, we ended up doing something that wasn't that different from physical training. Because I did a lot of training anyway, my reluctance to do these kinds of exercises was seriously reduced.

I sprinted from one end of the pool to the other. Honestly, I wouldn't really get tired by this much anymore.

The teacher seemed to check something, then shouted towards me.

"Now! This time, sprint back here. But use your power this time! Try to convince yourself that you're the fastest runner there is!"

She was measuring my running speed.

Once without me using my ability and then once more with me using my ability.

After I got ready, I tried to convince myself.

I'm Usain Bolt.

After I finished sprinting about 50 meters again, the teacher slowly nodded her head.

"That's amazing, Reinhardt."

Did something change? I felt like my grip power got stronger, but I had no idea about my speed.

"Before using your ability, you took 8.3 second, after using it, it took you exactly 8 seconds."

"…I honestly don't know."

I knew it was a little quicker, but did this actually have any meaningful effect? That might have been within the margin of error.

After that, the teacher gave me various other tests. They were mainly tests pertaining to my physical strength, endurance and agility.

And as I went through these, my mental state seemed to get more and more strange.

Self-Suggestion made the suggestions you had made to yourself become reality.

If I said that I was Usain Bolt while running, I'd actually be able to use his speed or more if my ability was at a certain level. On the premise that I absolutely believed in my words.

So, in the end, I had to keep thinking "I'm XX, I'm XX".

Yes, I felt like I was transported back to my childhood.

This supernatural power which made childish stubborn persistence reality, and the more stubborn I was the better my ability would work.

So…

Rather than Self-Suggestion wasn't this more like a winning mentality or something?

In fact, it did become true that I would have won anyway in the duel with Mayarton.

So did that mean that I'd win as long as I held a winning mentality?

Regardless of my ability's efficiency, I was still pathetic.

"……"

"What's the matter, Reinhardt?"

"Well, I was seriously thinking that I could break this tree if I punched it, so I'm a little… How should I put it? It's getting a little hard to bear."

Lolol My fists can break down trees lolol look, look.

That's how it should be! But it's not happening! How could that be!

Perhaps because I discarded this setting, I didn't really think about what kind of mental damage the person who actually used this ability would receive.

I actually used that kind of skill.

It was really pathetic.

"That's the kind of ability you have. Come on, try it."

Anyway.

I can crush this tree with my fists!

-Bam!

"Uwaark!"

I made a mistake.

I should have believed that I wouldn't break my wrist if I were to hit a tree like that full swing.

* * *

Ms. Rollendria tested my ability all day long. In addition to testing my physical strength and athletic abilities, she also conducted other tests.

For example, we tested if I could derive other abilities from my ability.

If I believed that I could use elemental supernatural powers, including Pyrokinesis, she wondered if I could really use them. We also tried Telepathy.

Of course, it didn't work at all. I didn't know if I could do it later, but as of now, the level of my ability was very low, so other than strengthening my body I couldn't do anything else.

Of course, since I always carried the Flame of Tuesday around with me, fire might actually come out, so I did the Pyrokinesis test a bit sloppily.

After all the tests were done, Ms. Rollendria slowly nodded her head as she took notes. We took until lunch, so this skill test really lasted throughout nearly all the classes.

"That's amazing, Reinhardt."

"I don't think it's that great…"

Obviously, it wasn't actually as strong as I thought it would be, but Ms. Rollendria shook her head.

"Obviously, the power displayed in its current state isn't very significant. But what is important is another aspect."

"What do you mean? What other aspect?"

"The degree of body reinforcement is rather weak, but you're actually pretty proficient in using your supernatural ability. From my point of view, although the level of your enhancement is still rather low, you are able to use your ability successfully multiple times in a row. Almost instantly."

It seemed like Ms. Rollendria was more focused on my control on the ability rather than the ability itself. Even if the strengthening effect was pretty insignificant, it seemed that I still succeeded in activating it continuously.

“That means that you are quite familiar with activating your ability before you had it.”

That surely would be considered great. Ability control was sometimes considered more important than the ability itself. I was already very good at using this ability of mine.

I should like that, but I didn’t feel so good about that.

“In other words, you are very gifted in self-suggestion.”

So all she was saying was that I had a great winning mentality!

Yeah, that’s it, anyway. As I wrote shitty novels like this, of course, I would have a great winning mentality to keep being a writer.

I got this ability because it was basically a cheat, but also because it suited me well.

The level of my ability wasn’t that high. However, activating it was quite easy for me.

I already had the mentality fitting for that flimsy ability called Self-Suggestion, because I lived my life completely reliant on that type of mentality.

It was like it was custom made for me… That didn’t make me happy.

Anyway, I was almost able to convince myself that, if it was someone else who had this ability, they wouldn’t be able to use it as skillfully as I did.

Of course, since this is a fantasy world, I had an easier time believing that something would definitely happen. If I were in my old world, I’d probably be like „Supernatural powers? You crazy?”. So, as it was that kind of world, I could readily believe in certain things.

Ms. Rollendria said that we were done with the tests and that I could go back to my regular classes the next day, as she realized that my abilities weren’t capable of anything more than simple body strengthening for now. Of course, since its potential was tremendous, she would periodically check on my condition.

After class, I stayed in the dormitory for today. I was going to skip my evening training and focus on developing my ability.

At this stage, Self-Suggestion mainly had effects related to body strengthening. However, as I scrapped it after vaguely setting it up in the novel, I didn't really describe what difficulties the person using it would go through.

In other words, there were a lot of things I didn't know about this ability. For example, the mental damage one had to suffer for always keeping up that winning mentality. I'd feel pathetic all on my own for seriously believing that some nonsensical situation would actually happen just because of the ability's effect.

There was one more thing.

If I believed that my punches were strong, they would be strong, however what if I get into a fight while believing my punches were strong, but I had to actually kick someone?

I would have to convince myself again that my kicks were the strongest.

I was proficient in activating it, but it was rather cumbersome. It would be more versatile to believe that my whole body became strengthened.

So, for example, I needed to generalize the way I used my ability a bit more to make it useful in a fight. Rather than focusing on punches and kicks separately, I needed to believe that my overall fighting capabilities were greatly improved.

Hearing that faith made me stronger, would make one believe that I was a paladin, but that wasn't it, okay?

The god and religion I believed in was myself after all.

It was an unorthodox religion were the object of worship and the worshipper happened to be one and the same.

That was the religion I had to believe in.

I think I'm going crazy.

* * *

For now I could only strengthen my physical abilities a bit, but later, other actions going beyond that would become possible for me. It would be such a waste of time to

apply the skill in such detail for each and every part.

Therefore, I should use it in a more comprehensive way and not just strengthen my punches or speed up my legs etc.

This required selection and focus however. If I used my ability to strengthen my whole body, it would become less effective than just strengthening my punches. So, rather than being too broad in what to strengthen, it would be better to be a little more specific, such as my body being familiar with hand-to-hand combat.

After my ability became stronger, it would be possible for my body to become proficient in anti-magic warfare or close quarter combat.

Ultimately, this ability was well suited for me.

I was a web novel author, and this action was no different from writing up character sheets in the end.

I wrote something down in my notebook at the moment.

Type A

Setting: Overall muscle strength improvement, swordsmanship level improvement. Improve cognitive ability, improve reaction speed.

I knew best that this was a necessary step. After setting up a Type A I also set up a Type B according to my own standards. So now if I thought about becoming Type A, not about which part to strengthen, my whole body would get strengthened as I should be able to remember the settings I set up myself. Self-Suggestion was literally the ability to become what I thought I was. If I memorized all the physical capabilities Type A should have, I would have these capabilities if I thought that I became Type A. That was the easiest way to use my ability.

Later, I'd obviously add Type Z: Can summon a Black Flame Dragon from right hand.

I was going crazy!

I didn't even use that kind of setting when I was in middle school! However, after I grew older and left school, I actually ended up making that kind of setting lol.

I felt like dying.

I should think that things were good, but that wasn't the case. Even though I should be the most mature among all the kids, I turned into the most problematic one, and now I locked myself in my dorm room writing up weird settings.

There was also my personality, but this ability gave me the final hit.

Just… What is life?.

While I was immersed in my self-reflection, the pager in my room suddenly rang.

-Brrring!

A pager.

One could think of it as some sort of magic intercom. Someone was calling me. Who'd be calling me? I first thought it was Ellen, but Ellen wouldn't call me just because I wasn't in the gym today.

I turned on the pager. The voice was familiar and yet its tone felt wildly unfamiliar.

[Come to the main lobby]

It was Charlotte.

CHAPTER 55

When I came to the main lobby, Charlotte was beckoning me to follow her, then we headed somewhere. Evening had already passed, so it was night. There were no students on the streets of Temple. There were no other dormitories around the Royal Class', so it was quiet.

What would Bertus say if he saw me with Charlotte, I wondered. Nothing good, that was for sure. However, I had to be more wary of Charlotte, at the moment, so I couldn't ignore her words.

Perhaps having understood my worries, Charlotte sat down on a dimly lit bench between two street lamps.

It was obvious what this was going to be about. She was going to ask me how the search for Valier was progressing.

I looked at Charlotte sitting on the bench. She didn't look at me and was just blankly staring towards the lamp post. I couldn't see her face well as it was pretty dark, but as always she gave off a calm and cold aura.

It was completely different from Adriana. She was calm but gentle.

Charlotte was calm but extremely cold. Her classmates would have a hard time with her, although she probably didn't show them this side of her.

Both Bertus and Charlotte had one thing in common: They hid their true selves.

"How does it feel to suddenly have a supernatural ability?"

As if beating around the bush, Charlotte asked me that, out of the blue.

"Good… I guess?"

Because I started with nothing after all.

"……Really?"

Charlotte was speaking in an uncertain manner. What kind of power did Charlotte hold? If it was true that Charlotte held some supernatural ability, it seemed like she didn't like her own power that much.

"I heard, it's called Self-Suggestion."

"Ah, yes."

"It's the kind of ability that activates when you strongly believe in something."

She was different from the ordinary students. Charlotte already knew how my supernatural ability operated. Well the abilities of the students, except for Charlotte's, weren't kept secret. It might just be something anyone had access to.

"Is it safe to assume that there was no progress in the search for the boy?"

Finding a Mr. Kim in Seoul is extremely difficult even if that Mr. Kim actually existed. It was a bit hasty to ask if there was any progress when she commissioned for this search not too long ago.

"…I'm trying."

Of course, I wasn't trying at all. There was no reason for me to.

"Yes, it would be impatient of me to assume there was already some progress. However, do keep in mind that if you don't produce any results, there is no reason for me to leave a useless criminal organization who would only bring harm to the Empire alone."

Charlotte said that as if she was trying to remind me that the countdown had already begun.

My plan was to slowly report on my progress to extend my life.

However, there were a lot of problems with that.

In fact, no matter how hard we were trying to look for the Valier she was looking for, we wouldn't get any results, but if we were to "find" a trace, what would it be and how should we answer the question of how we found it? It was the Prince and Princess who were looking for Valier after all.

If they couldn't find him with the traces I gave them, they would be suspicious of me, no doubt. Even if beggars knew beggars best, they would still carry out their own search in secret.

So it was best to do just a little bit of work, but I hadn't yet decided how to display it to her.

Charlotte hadn't gotten to the point where she would urge me yet. That should have given me some time.

Well, it seemed like Charlotte had some more business with me other than checking for progress.

"You, try it."

"What?"

"If you believe that you know where the child is, you might find out where he is."

Oh, that was what she was going for.

Charlotte seemed to put some hope into my vague supernatural ability. Actually, my Self-Suggestion didn't have this kind of function. At its present level, I could strengthen my body, at best. There was no way I could acquire some unknown knowledge with it.

That would be absurd. If one were absolutely sure to know what one's neighbor was doing next door, that wouldn't mean it would pop into one's mind like a vision.

Of course, there were some parts of Self-Suggestion that even I didn't know about yet, so it might be possible at a later stage.

I obviously should say no to her request.

However, seeing Charlotte trying to grab at straws, I changed my mind.

This.

If I play my cards right, I might be able to extend mine and the gang's life. Rather, if I use my power as an excuse this just might be possible. Clues found by the gang or the

Thieves' Guild might not be able to convince them, but if they were actually found through my supernatural power, they should have no doubt about them.

And I was that Valier person Charlotte was looking for.

Also, my power is quite the ridiculous one.

It was something that made the impossible possible…

"That's… It probably won't work, but… I can try."

Charlotte didn't look too expectant either.

"……Do you, need this?"

However, as if she wanted to do this properly at least, she took out the portrait of Valier and handed it over to me.

……I couldn't believe that she would carry around that painting with her. Guilt crept into my mind. The thought that running away would be the best option here never left my head. Every time I saw Charlotte valuing me so much, I felt depressed.

Damn it.

But I had to deceive this kid again. No matter how difficult the lives of the gang members and Loyar were.

I had to deceive this kid again.

I intently stared at my portrait. This was absolutely useless, actually.

To activate Self-Suggestion I had to absolutely believe that I knew where that boy was.

But I didn't really have to believe that, I knew he was right next to her.

It wasn't a matter of belief. If I didn't know where I was located, that would be a problem on its own!

Anyway.

It was impossible for me to track someone else's location with my skill, but I somehow had to act as if I knew where Valier was. I thought about what excuse I should make up.

"Hmmm… Well, I can see a castle."

"!"

I began to explain what I went through with Charlotte.

"Castle. What castle?"

"I don't know. It's desolate… There's this huge castle and the scene in front of it is… someone Riding a horse… I think…"

Instead of exactly knowing where the kid was, I tried to explain it similar to someone with psychometry.

Charlotte didn't explain to me who the child she was looking for was. However, if I explained Valier's and Dyrus' escape from the Demon King's Castle, she'd be able to see that my ability had potential.

If I continued to prove my worth to Charlotte like this, she'd leave me alone.

Charlotte opened her mouth blankly, astonished that I knew about facts I shouldn't know about.

"I don't know. Men on horses were chasing after them. They were running away. there also seemed to be demons… That's all I know for now."

I really wanted to bite down hard on my tongue as I was acting like that. Charlotte's lips trembled as she looked at me blankly.

"M, more… More. Do it more. Look more. More. More… A bit more…"

Charlotte suddenly got up from the bench, and told me to do it more. I wasn't confident that I was able to meet her desperate eyes.

I felt like I was doing something incredibly bad, and it was actually a pretty bad thing to do. No matter how much I wanted to live, I was still playing with this girl's heart.

I had to do it even though I knew that these small lies would eventually give birth to even bigger lies.

“I, I can’t see more… I’d see the same scene again… That’s all. I don’t know any more. We didn’t do these kinds of things during the supernatural power test… I don’t know why I can’t see more… Maybe my ability is still too weak…”

Even though I didn’t give her the location of the kid she was looking for, just knowing these things I shouldn’t know seemed to be enough for Charlotte to find hope.

“Can’t you figure out… Whether he’s dead or alive? Even just that… Even just knowing that fact… Just that… Please…”

Charlotte, who had been threatening me, pleaded with me now. Before she saw me as something lower than a bug because I was a lowly person who was part of a criminal organization.

“Please… Please… Find it out for me… Please· · …”

Now she was about to kneel before me. Her cold and stiff expression had completely distorted and before I knew it Charlotte was crying before me.

Charlotte had to suffer through horrific events after she got abducted, and she knew that I was supposed to be the only survivor beside her who went through that suffering. And I eventually saved her life. Perhaps to Charlotte, I was the only one left in her world.

Even that course of events was filled with lies, and now I had to do the same thing again. The only reason I had to do this was because my life was at stake. Then and now.

I said to Charlotte who was begging me to find out if he was dead or alive:

“I don’t… I don’t know where he’s located.”

I had a premonition that I would have to continue tell a lot more lies from now on.

“But I’m sure he’s alive.”

I had no other choice but to give Charlotte at least a bit of the truth.

“Hng… Sob, sob!”

Charlotte grabbed my collar and let out a violent cry.

“Really… Really…? He’s alive…?”

“Huh… Yes. I can… Feel at least that much…”

“Tha, thank… Thank you… Thank you…”

I couldn’t do anything but bite my lips as I watched Charlotte sobbing, looking as if she was about to collapse at any moment.

It was alright being called a plot destroyer and getting criticized by many people.

However, having to deceive a person like this was something hard to accept.

“Thanks…”

The word “Thanks” felt like it stabbed through my heart multiple times.

* * *

Among all the supernatural powers, my supernatural power was especially vague.

“This was the first time I have ever tried this. Really. I couldn’t feel anything like that before, only in this case.”

“I don’t know why it worked… but, I’m relieved.”

Charlotte had no other choice but to accept this strange excuse, that it didn’t work in any other instance, as I knew these things that no one else should know. The scenes I described were ones that I wouldn’t know unless I was Valier.

She didn’t even suspect in the least that I was Valier. Of course, it might have been that my vague supernatural power had that much persuasive power.

Charlotte told me not to tell anyone what I saw and asked me to never mention that I could do things like that. Unlike the orders she directed towards me up until now, these seemed more like favors she asked of me.

“You know why I’m asking this of you… Please, Reinhardt.”

Now she even used my name.

“Yeah, I know.”

If Bertus found out about this, he might want to use me in that way as well. As it’s an ability I didn’t even have, I’d rather have Charlotte be silent about this. If someone were to ask me why I was able to know these kinds of things, but not other things, I’d be the only one in trouble here.

Charlotte seemed to have become as desperate towards me as to my other self.

At this point, I was the only clue she had towards finding Valier. Charlotte, after she calmed down a bit, had a reddened face.

She now seemed to realize that she was begging and pleading in front of this guy she completely disregarded not too long ago.

“Uh, ah… That… Hn…”

From her point of view, she showed me one of her ugly sides. Charlotte seemed to have calmed down, but she fell into a more complicated mood.

“Never mind. I don’t know who he is to you, but he must be an important person. Then this is a reasonable reaction.”

When I told her that it was possible even for the Imperial Princess to lose her composure, as she was human, she bowed her head towards me.

“To think that… The day would come for me to receive that kind of consolation.”

Was it because you were being comforted by a commoner, or by a criminal, or was it because you felt pathetic getting comforted by another person like this? Charlotte looked blankly into the night sky, before she started to speak again.

“He’s the one who saved me.”

“……Is that so?”

“If not for him, I… I wouldn’t have been able to return.”

There was no one in the Imperial Capital who didn’t know that the Princess was kidnapped by the Demon King. However, no one knew what happened to her while she was there and how she got out.

Both Charlotte and Bertus seemed to want to bury this matter.

Charlotte didn’t have any real proof as she didn’t actually suffer from an assassination and was able to escape.

Dyrus’ case was different. He faced direct death threats and even fought, but his link was too weak to the Princess for it to be connected to her nearly dying.

All of this could have been made as the Princess running away on her own accord because she got surprised.

Therefore, the assassination attempt on the Princess simply got buried without a problem. So, information on Dyrus or some kid who supposedly saved the Princess didn’t come to light.

So Charlotte wouldn’t have come out with the truth if I didn’t get that lead just now. Telling someone this truth was really dangerous.

He was the one who saved her life.

Hence, why she was looking for him. It seemed like a good enough reason to look for someone like that, but was it enough to lose one’s rationale over?

“Honestly… If he was just someone who saved your life than it’s…”

“It’s not something that simple. “

Charlotte looked at me.

“If it wasn’t for him, I would have gone crazy.”

Even if she hadn’t died, she would have gone crazy. Charlotte was weeping bitterly in that prison cell, cradling her mother’s corpse in her arms.

She certainly looked like she was in a dangerous state. She didn't even notice that there was someone in the hallway before I called out to her.

"We were in a place filled with corpses and the smell of blood. Anyone would have gone crazy in there."

Charlotte seemed to recall the time we met.

"In a place like that, he said that everything will be fine, that we'll win. He kept on trying to reassure me, trying to comfort me somehow."

The calm Charlotte started to tremble. At that time I had no idea who Charlotte really was.

"He told me that he had lost all his memories. He didn't know who he was. Even why he was in that place. In the midst of all that, even though it should have been scary for him as well, he tried to sooth me. He didn't even know who I was, so I was just trembling and crying in that disgusting place, while he tried to comfort me somehow."

I didn't take care of her, because she was Charlotte de Gardias. I just took care of her because she was a trembling, scared, little kid and about to give up on everything, even though I should have felt terrified for not having any memories.

It was a lie that I had lost my memories, but it was true that I had no knowledge of her identity, my situation or the state of this world. It seemed like Charlotte wasn't just trying to find me because I saved her life.

"I made a promise."

Yeah. Charlotte definitely made one with me.

"I would definitely bring back his memory. I promised that…"

It seemed like she wanted to find me to keep her promise. Of course, I didn't actually have amnesia. I had the body of the Demon Prince Valier, but I wasn't that Valier.

It seemed that my lies had become firmly engraved in Charlotte's mind. It was like she imprinted on me. Something that couldn't be erased easily.

“Would he really want that? Getting back his memory?”

“……What?”

“Wouldn’t he have suffered quite a lot in the Demon King’s Castle, to lose his memory? Wouldn’t it be better if he didn’t remember? Of course, it’s important to remember who you are, but there are some memories that are better left forgotten.”

I was saying this in the hope that she would feel less pressured to keep her promise. I didn’t really have any memories that I lost, but I would feel insanely guilty if she kept on trying to retrieve something that I actually never lost.

Listening to my words, Charlotte looked at me with widened eyes.

“……That’s possible… Yeah. That could be… Yes.”

If one experienced something so terrible, wouldn’t it be better to just forget everything? Charlotte seemed to agree with me to some extent.

“Yeah, it’s not too late to talk it over after you found him.”

In all my guilt I felt slightly relieved. Charlotte’s expression, which seemed so infinitely sad ready to give up everything if she heard that I was dead, lightened up a little. She seemed to feel a lot of guilt that she lost me and couldn’t keep the promise.

She looked a little more energetic and even smiled at me for the first time.

“Find him.”

Charlotte looked me straight in the eyes.

“Then, I’ll do whatever you want me to do.”

“……Isn’t that quite the risky promise to make to a lowly and dangerous bastard like me?”

Charlotte believed that I was the only string that connected her and Valier, so that would explain her sudden attitude change.

“You were quite reckless in that duel. You didn’t seem to be stupid, but you went

ahead and did something like that because of your pride. Although you have a strange personality, you didn't strike me as an idiot, and yet you acted like one at that moment… That's what I thought."

"You talk quite well in front of the subject you're badmouthing."

"That's all I could see at that moment."

It seemed Charlotte had a different opinion on this than Bertus. Bertus admired my tenacity, getting up even after getting beaten over and over. However, Charlotte seemed to evaluate me as someone who would use force even in situations in which it would be better to yield, because of my pride.

"However, even though you should have lost, you won in such a nonsensical way."

If I had lost in that state, Charlotte's evaluation of me wouldn't have changed, but in the end, I was able to emerge victorious because of something as ridiculous as suddenly awakening a supernatural ability mid-fight.

Seeing that outcome, Charlotte seemed to change her mind a bit.

Returning to her usual calm and cold demeanor, Charlotte spoke quietly.

"There are times when one has to do something reckless, as it seems."

She wanted something so bad that she even came to a fellow classmate who was part of a criminal organization.

That was why Charlotte went beyond just asking for cooperation with someone, with whom she usually wouldn't want to have been involved with. She even made such a dangerous promise with me.

She was lucky, that I was actually Valier. What if I were some perverted weirdo? Huh?

"I feel like a shrimp caught in a whale's fight."

"Are you talking about Bertus?"

"Yeah, you both might not realize it, but while you may be fine, I'm completely exhausted. I have to watch my back every time I go out at night."

No matter how one might look at it, I seemed like a total opportunist…

Man… The situation turned out like this even with Charlotte there. Later when I meet Bertus he'll probably ask things like: "You're pretty close with Charlotte, aren't you?" How should I answer him? Or what if someone from Charlotte's side saw me with Bertus. They'd probably complain saying something like: "You're getting along quite well with Bertus, don't you? Huh?" That might actually happen.

Honestly, I didn't want to have trouble with anyone, these two included, at this point. It would be near impossible for me to remain neutral between them.

Charlotte smiled, the corners of her mouth slightly raised, after hearing what I said. It felt smiliar to Bertus' smile when he revealed his more insidious nature to me.

"I believe you know how to take care of yourself quite well. Reinhardt."

Even if their factions were different, they were still the same.

Why did they act so similarily?

In fact, if she appeared in the original novel, wouldn't she actually take Bertus' position?

CHAPTER 56

My tightrope act between Charlotte and Bertus seemed to have started for real now. Charlotte actually needed me more at the moment, but I didn't know what Bertus would do if he found out that I was on Charlotte's side.

I had no idea how to tackle this issue either. Charlotte would grow stronger with each passing day and she wouldn't touch me until I found Valier.

So, now to Bertus. How should I deal with him? I decided to come clean, as I would be exposed anyway sooner or later.

I clearly told Charlotte, that I didn't want to get on Bertus' bad side as I was part of Class A. I also told her that I was told to watch her to some extent.

Charlotte also didn't want me to get harmed by Bertus as I still had to find Valier, so she said that I could give him some information on her.

I really turned into a complete opportunist.

In the end, I really became someone weak against the strong. Aren't I totally like those hyenas from my first life?

"Seems like she's looking for someone."

The next day, I talked with Bertus on the terrace of the dormitory.

……In terms of dating simulations, if Ellen's fixed encounter place was the dining room and the gym, then Bertus' would be the terrace. Bertus listened to what I had to say and nodded slowly.

He made it seem like this was the first time he heard about that, but Bertus actually already knew this. Therefore, even though it was nothing new to him, I still provided him with information that ordinary students shouldn't know.

"Hmm… Did Charlotte tell you herself?"

In the end, I had no other choice but to tell Bertus part of the truth. There was no way that Bertus wouldn't find out.

"She told me to find him."

"To you…? Hm… Ah. Yeah, that would be possible."

Bertus nodded, perhaps remembering my origins.

"Seems like you already know who she's looking for?"

Bertus nodded at my question.

"Yeah, I knew that much… Good. So she hasn't found him yet."

Just by hearing that she instructed me to find him, he inferred that Charlotte hadn't found me yet, so the information wasn't completely useless to Bertus.

"She probably told you to find him using the Rotary Gang, not you personally… How is it? Any progress?"

I felt goosebumps all over my body at Bertus' causal tone.

I never told Bertus about the gang. I planned on telling him today, but he already knew. His attitude, as if it was only natural for him to know, was rather creepy.

Bertus did a background check on me, and didn't even give any signs that he knew about those things. Just because he didn't say it outright didn't mean he didn't know. By saying this directly to me, Bertus wanted to show me that I was well within his own range of effect.

It wasn't just the Rotary Gang. He should have also found out about its connection with the Thieves' guild. I knew he was probably aware of it, but I didn't think he would mention it like that in my presence.

As I froze up slightly, Bertus grinned.

"You don't have to get so nervous just because of something like that."

"If you know, just tell me in advance please. You're giving me a heart attack."

“It’s a bit too much to say you’re just from the streets, is it not? So I just looked into you a little. Did you make any progress?”

Fortunately, Bertus didn’t think I was Valier himself, like Charlotte. It probably was hard to accept that the thing they were searching for was right next to them.

However, unlike Charlotte, he didn’t show any malice towards me even after knowing that I was related to a criminal organisation. I had no idea what he was thinking.

Anyway, regarding progress.

“How could there be any? I only have one portrait and not even a name.”

“Well… I guess so.”

He seemed to have already expected that I made no progress. If I actually did, that would undermine the efficiency of his own forces.

“Did she tell you who he is?”

“No. She didn’t tell me.”

Even though I told him that, it didn’t seem like I was expected to know. Bertus looked at Temple’s scenery while enjoying his milk tea.

“Okay… Good. The important thing is that I’m also looking for him, Reinhardt.”

“……I figured.”

“If you come across any clues, please let me know if possible.”

“I think it would be best if I don’t find any clues in this situation though.”

“Haha! That’s true…”

If I chose either of their sides, I would become the enemy of the other side, so it would be best for me to not discover anything. As if agreeing to me, Bertus nodded.

“It’s fine. After leaving her like this for a bit more she’ll end up self-destructing anyway. Well, seeing that she even reached out to you, maybe she already did.”

Self-destruction.

Bertus seemed to think that if Charlotte didn't find me, she would become increasingly more self-destructive. It made me even more depressed knowing what that meant.

Charlotte was focusing all her attention on finding me, so it seemed like she was rather negligent in regards to the fight for the throne. That was the reason why he told me I could just leave her alone and why he was rather relaxed about the situation.

"I didn't think it would be to that extent though…"

Bertus smacked his lips as if he was disappointed.

Bertus was so wary of Charlotte that he made plans for her to never come back alive, but she ended up coming back. Therefore, he was wholeheartedly preparing to confront her, but the enemy of whom he was so wary of just kept on looking for some boy as if she was obsessed.

Betus seemed regretful. Could he be sad seeing his biggest enemy falling apart like that? It was important to win, but it was also important how one won.

"Okay, if you can't find him at all, that's just how it is. By the way, speaking of which."

As if he was done talking about Charlotte, Bertus turned to look at me. He didn't seem to be wary of her any longer at this point. Did he not see her as a worthy rival anymore, because she was just focusing on finding some kid? He seemed to think that it was okay, now that he knew where Charlotte's priorities lay.

"Are you the next master of the Thieves' Guild or something?"

"……Huh? Ah… I know it's quite easy to misunderstand in this situation, but I'm not. I've never even been to the Thieves' Guild."

Although I said I had connections to it, I didn't even know where the Thieves' Guild was. That was the truth. Bertus was already aware that I was a beggar, but he seemed to think that there were some things about me that weren't normal for a kid from the streets.

He seemed to be under the impression that it was because I was the next guild master being trained by the Thieves' Guild. So, I would have already received sufficient training before my enrollment.

I sighed.

"I don't know if you'll believe me or not, but I honestly want to cut my ties with them."

My original plan was to cut my ties with the Rotary Gang after awakening a talent. Somehow, I ended up in this situation where both the Prince and Princess found out about my background after doing thorough background checks on me.

"Why?"

"I don't want to make a living by doing dirty work. I don't want to end up dead in a ditch."

That was also my honest wish. Who would want to spend their life fighting nonstop? My values weren't much different from ordinary people.

I wanted to idle around and eat comfortably. I didn't think that was possible for now, so I chose the next best option.

"Hmm… Really? Are you saying these things that you don't actually mean because you're in front of me?"

"Even if that's true, wouldn't that mean that you already failed to find out my true background then?"

The person who was aiming to become the next Emperor failed to find out the identity of the Guild Master of the Thieves' Guild? He'd already be unqualified for that position if that were the case. As if my words were plausible, Bertus burst into laughter.

"Hmm… So you're closer to the Rotary Gang than the Thieves' Guild… I must say, it's a bit disappointing."

"What do you mean, disappointing?"

What was so disappointing about me not being the heir to the Thieves' Guild? I thought there was a good reason why Bertus stayed calm even after finding out about my background.

"Reinhardt."

"Yeah."

"I tend to believe that the empowerment of crime is inevitable."

"Inevitable, you say?"

Why was he talking about that all of a sudden?

"Even if the Thieves' Guild was to be uprooted, I believe that another group would take its place."

Even if one were to dismantle one criminal group, as time goes by, just like weed, new criminals would gather together and obtain power again, spontaneously. Therefore, eradicating criminal organisations resulted in others filling their places, so completely eradicating crime was impossible.

Look at this kid.

"In that case, if one couldn't get rid of it, wouldn't it be good to take control of that shady power, to completely own it? If it's impossible to completely get rid of it, it would be the best option to get rid of the old power and monitor the new criminal power that would fill its place. Being able to handle things that could only be solved by the dark side would be a bonus, of course"

I slowly got an inkling of what he was talking about.

He looked at me with a creepy smile.

"So, won't you become the guild master?"

I could see now why Bertus said Charlotte would end up self-destructing.

Charlotte only thought of finding Valier through me. She ended up so nerve wrecking just to find Valier.

However, Bertus was thinking of dominating the Capital's dark side through me.

* * *

In the past, the United States enforced the prohibition of alcohol, which consequently led to the tremendous growth of mafia organizations in America. This happened because if one were to ban easily producible goods, they would be continued to be made illegally, leading to organizations distributing these goods to emerge. If there was demand there would always be supply, and if the production and distribution of said product was illegal, there would be a number of criminal organizations producing and distributing them.

The empowerment of crime was therefore inevitable, because there are always people who covet things they shouldn't, and someone supplying them.

To facilitate the supply, crime got organized, and thus the concept of organized crime appeared. It wasn't something that could be stopped.

Bertus judged that such a development was inevitable. Even if he were to uproot them, someone else would just take their place, so he thought it would be better to take control of it. That way, even if a new organization were to appear, he would be able to tighten his grip on it much faster.

So, Bertus wanted me to become the next guild master.

To take control of the whole underworld in the future by first taking control of the Thieves' Guild.

He could also make use of it for personal purposes other than controlling and monitoring criminal organizations, so Bertus seemed to think that this was a pretty good plan.

So, he proposed to me, who was a Temple student as well as a member of the Rotary Gang, if I had any intentions of becoming the King of the Imperial Capital's underworld. That was why he thought it was rather disappointing that I didn't have much connection to the Thieves' Guild.

The size of our visions were completely different. No matter if this was the right thing to do or not, our way of thinking was just completely different.

Bertus said there was no rush to come to a decision yet, and this plan was far too big to immediately implement anyway.

This was just too big to just decide on the fly, and to be honest, this wasn't really appealing to me at all. If I were to get involved in a criminal organization like that and absorb it, I'd be forced to do various things. I didn't even know if I'd be able to do something like that and if my mind would be able to endure it.

So, Bertus ended our conversation after he offered me this.

The guild master of the Thieves' Guild…

It was true, that there was nothing bad about having power. Actually rather than bad things, weren't there many good things about it? Besides, Bertus, who was in the line of succession to the throne, said he'd look after me.

I was already part of something that was almost an illegal organization.

And one could do a lot more with an illegal organization than with a legitimate one.

However, I was actually someone with no ambition at all. I never had anything to do with organizational management, so I didn't know what I'd have to do. Would I really be able to do something like that? My goal was to just eat and live well, nothing more. If it weren't for the gates, I wouldn't even have come to Temple in the first place.

In any case, the Prince gave me something to think about, but it didn't seem like he wanted to push me to become the guild master though.

Of course, he had no reason to actually use me for that. If he really wanted to have the Thieves' Guild's guild master in his hands, he could just do it himself.

In the first place, both Charlotte and Bertus knew the whereabouts of the Thieves' Guild, they just didn't want to get their hands dirty by interacting with them.

He maybe just wanted to test my usefulness and my abilities.

If that were the reasons, then that would mean that the Prince didn't have much interest in controlling the underworld yet. If it was really necessary for him, he wouldn't do it through me. In the end, it was more likely that he wanted to see how

ambitious I was and whether my abilities were up to par.

Anyway, there was no rush. It was a decision I had to slowly and carefully think about.

* * *

One could feel the atmosphere of the Victory Festival even inside of Temple. The training routine itself didn't change much, but one could feel this overall excitement floating about Temple.

Some students packed their bags in advance in preparation to return home for the period the school was closed. So, while there were a lot of kids looking forward to the Festival there were also some who just looked forward to returning back to their home.

Everyone had different plans.

"The Knights Templar?"

"Yeah, after watching the return of the Knights Templar I'll go back to the monastery. It's been a while."

Adriana was smiling brightly imagining the majestic appearance of the Knights Templar, who would soon return after accomplishing their great mission.

The Five Great Bishops united their forces in an army for the Demon World War. Priests and Paladins of all religions gathered together and played a pivotal role in the Allied Forces, and now came back after leading the church to victory.

Of course, I knew that part well. The Knights Templar would continue to exist even after that, and it's the place all Paladins and Priests dream to enter. Adriana also seemed to want to join them.

"And then you're going back to the monastery?"

"Yes, I grew up in the Towan Monastery of the Saint-Owan Grand Duchy."

Adriana said she grew up in a monastery dedicated to Towan, the god of purity. She was an orphan, but thanks to her outstanding talent, she was able to enter Temple's

Royal Class easily. So, it seemed like she joined Temple starting high school.

By the way, speaking of the divine power of Towan, the god of purity. It would be especially strong against undead. Of course, I wasn't an undead, but I really wouldn't get along well with that order.

Towan's doctrine was fundamentally based on hatred towards Demons after all.

Honestly, I couldn't remember all the settings in detail, but after living and studying in Temple for some time I was able to relearn quite some knowledge I had forgotten. For me, as this world's writer, it felt quite strange to have to study the content I just randomly pieced together to set up the Churches and their doctrine.

"By the way, weren't the paladins and priests of Towan not allowed to get married?"

"Yeah, what of it?"

Adriana tilted her head as if asking me why I asked her something so obvious.

"You shouldn't decide something like that at such a young age."

It wouldn't be too late if you made that decision after you grew up, you punk. You could still become a priest after seeing what the world had to offer, you know? Adriana smirked at this young old man's whining.

"If you were to worship a god and attend masses, you'd change your mind, Junior. There are people in this world who can live on faith alone. It's a full life in its own way."

I felt like she was trying to convert me, to the point where I started to get scared. Adriana slowly brought up this topic and she seemed to think that now was the right time.

Adriana suddenly grabbed my hands and wouldn't budge at all.

It was rather scary.

"So, do you want to go to a mass together with me after the school closes?"

"P, please don't do this…"

“You don’t even have to accurately follow the doctrine of Towan. Everyone deserves his grace, Junior. I’m sure they will be able to fix your twisted personality as well. They are all good people.”

At some point, Adriana started preaching to me. No, I was very grateful to her and I knew she was kind, but this was just pressuring!

“Bathed under the Saint’s light, we can all find happiness, Junior.”

Adriana suddenly turned into a church sister even though she wasn’t part of the church yet.

Honestly, I couldn’t agree to that even out of gratitude. She probably prepared various methods to get me to come, both physical and psychological.

Yes, I absolutely knew it would be like that!

She’d use a trick of first gently approaching me and when I was about to refuse she would make me feel sorry and naturally lead me to her church! This would happen once, twice, thrice until I can’t leave anymore…

I thought you liked it… I’m sorry… I didn’t mean it like that… I was just happy to share my happiness with you, I didn’t want to drag you with me… Sorry for misunderstanding… Although, please do come to the next mass! If you won’t come, I’d be very sad……

That was what this felt like!

Ah.

Sister.

Are you doing well.

I heard you got married…

I was curious about how things were in my old world suddenly…

“I, I’m already part of a different belief!”

Adriana tilted her head as I shouted, appearing like I was about to be dragged to hell.

“Huh? You already have a god you follow?”

“Well. I wouldn’t call him a god or something… But there’s something I believe in.”

“Huh…? Who?”

I looked at Adriana with a determined expression.

Yes, I was already part of a religion.

“Me.”

“……?”

“I, I believe in myself.”

A religion where I was both the only worshipper and object of worship.

In other words, I was the head of the Winning Mentality Church and its object of faith itself!

I believed in myself.

That was my source of strength.

It was even more amazing because it was actually true.

“Eh… Huuh?”

Adriana didn’t understand a word I said, so she looked dumbfounded for a while.

After listening to my detailed explanation she slapped my back and told me not to say strange things anymore.

CHAPTER 57

Friday.

After classes were over, everyone got excited and started running wild, and the most annoying one among them was No. 8 Kono Lint.

”It’s closing todaaaaay!”

Those who planned on returning to their homes hurried back to the dormitory to pack their things, and the ones who would remain went on to do their own thing because a long break was about to begin.

I would stay in the dormitory for today and leave tomorrow when things have gotten calmer. I was going to meet up with Eleris after all. As I was taking the mana train multiple times, to shake off any possible tails I might have, I planned on transforming to a different appearance using Sarkegaar’s ring before going to Eleris’ store.

I could go to the Rotary Gang, but I was reluctant to go there because of various reasons. It seemed like the Prince and the Princess had already begun to look into that place.

This might be an honor in its own way. When would higher ranked people pay so much attention to a beggar’s organization after all?

It wasn’t intentional, but the outcome was moderately good.

Charlotte would try to protect the Rotary Gang because it held the only clue to find Valier, while Bertus would try to use the Rotary Gang as a stepping stone to take over the Capital’s underworld, so he wouldn’t do anything to it.

Depending on my actions, they might actually help me, far from trying to harm me.

Eventually, by proving my usefulness to both of them, I seemed to have turned into one hell of an opportunist. Someone needed by both the Prince and the Princess.

I might actually be quite the popular guy, huh?

Everyone was excited. Both the ones who would return and the ones who would stay behind.

Of course, there were three exceptions.

Ellen Artorius, who'd eventually become a hero never before seen, would continue to think about her brother's death. Perhaps this festival wasn't something Ellen could be excited about.

The other two were Bertus and Charlotte.

The two of them were going to be very busy during this festival, having to rush from one place to another. They tried not to show any exhaustion, but they seemed to be struggling.

"Charlotte."

"……Yeah."

Therefore, I was able to wittness a rare scene. I saw the two of them holding a conversation. No one said anything superficially, but the two of them tried to pretend not to know each other in Temple. Of course, they didn't get along at all.

So, even though it had been a while since they entered the school, that would have been the first time seeing them hold a conversation in Temple for everyone.

The two of them were talking as they walked side by side.

-So, the order of protocol is…

-I already memorized everything. I don't have to hear it again.

-As expected, you're smart.

-No, you're the only oh-so-smart one.

-Why does it sound like you're being sarcastic even though it's supposed to be a compliment?

-Because I was being sarcastic.

Bertus, who pretended to be kind, and Charlotte, who was being overtly blunt.

They seemed to be talking about things related to the festival. Since it was an official imperial event, both Bertus and Charlotte would have to make an appearance.

Everyone was staring blankly at the half-siblings holding their conversation, as if they couldn't believe this was happening.

And, as if not in the least interested in this scene, I watched Ellen Artorius carelessly walking out of the classroom building.

"Get out of my way, you bastard."

-Pang!

"Urg!"

Then everyone turned to the scene of A-9 Erich hitting B-3 Scarlett in the head while passing by.

"How unlucky."

Erich could be seen passing by, and A-10 Cayer briefly sweared at her before following behind Erich. I wondered where Ludwig was. I wasn't sure if he had already left.

Scarlett kept her head down and didn't say a word. All the other students left, pretending they didn't see her at all.

For just how long did I have to watch this? According to the original story, Ludwig would end up requesting a duel with Erich. However, this had already gone terribly wrong, just because I intervened once.

Of course, Ludwig's personality itself hadn't changed, so Ludwig would end up saving Scarlett one day. So if I intervened now, the future would change again and it might become even more unpredictable.

Fiery red hair and red eyes.

Scarlett raised her head and met my eyes.

Everyone had already left, so Scarlett and I were the only ones left in the hallway.

Scarlett lowered her gaze again in fear after our eyes met.

There were numerous sins I committed in this world, this grievous situation definitely was one of them.

She'll get saved.

Ludwig will be the one to save her.

Those settings were made with such simple, careless thoughts. Both the reason for her bullying and the solution. However, I eventually got confronted with this reality I created with my own hands.

This strange reality, it was me who created it.

"What's wrong with red?."

"……?"

I looked at Scarlett as if I was talking to her.

"What's so important about hair color? Isn't it more important being the best in Temple?"

Scarlett raised her head and looked at me again. She was treated like a bad omen by everyone, because of her red eyes and hair, so she got bullied because of it for a long time. I approached her. She backed off against the wall, as if trying to escape from me.

I wasn't trying to threaten her.

"You saw it. The winner's always right."

Scarlett came to see my duel.

"Didn't you come to see that?"

Why did Scarlett come to see my duel?

She wasn't from the same class, but she came to see my duel with the senior. I accepted this duel with that senior without even having a talent.

It was clear what the outcome would be. I didn't know why she came.

However, she saw it clearly. I was able to emerge victorious against that senior in the end.

She must have seen me stand back up again and again, despite our difference in origin and strength.

"Don't doze off."

"……"

Then I whispered to Scarlett, whose eyes seemed like those of a frightened rabbit. It was just like the sweet temptation of a devil.

"Should I tell you something?"

"Wha,t… is it?"

Right.

Scarlett talked to me quite politely. Come to think of it, this was our first time talking.

Anyway, I told her Erich Lafaeri's secret.

It wasn't even that big of a deal.

"That guy's a pushover."

You were in the same year. How long did you want to get pushed around by that weakling?

You already knew that much.

'The trouble maker Reinhardt went beyond just starting fights on his own and now egged others on to fight. He's said to be a devil's seed born to instill conflict, destroy friendships and disrupt other's peaceful life at Temple.'

That was right.

Objectively speaking, I was no longer just a villain, I was slowly transitioning into a supervillain.

Put in Batman terms, I wouldn't be the Joker, but rather the Penguin.

I even had the unprecedented luck to awaken a supernatural ability in the middle of a fight even though I was completely incompetent.

It was even common for me to swear at nobles while being a beggar, and even laying hands on them.

Not only was I able to beat up my senior, but I even got the college level seniors of the Royal Class, who didn't know about my true personality, to believe I was good and righteous. They even promised to take care of me if I ever got into trouble.

Currently, I received support from both Bertus and Charlotte who were Number 1 of their respective class and were virtually the most powerful. In other words, I was rather free from their power which transcended Temple. They both had no intention of directly controlling me.

I strangely didn't even have any problems with the ones that could subdue me. Ellen, who was pretty much the strongest among the first years and had no close friends, even taught me swordsmanship.

Of course, that was because I only clashed with people who had seriously flawed personalities and picked a fight with me first.

And now, no matter how big a problem the bullying was, I was even urging the victim to fight the perpetrator.

The man who was behind every incident that took place in Temple and only thought about messing around.

That was who I became.

"……"

Scarlett remained frozen for a long time after telling her that Erich was actually a

total pushover. It wasn't like she didn't know that or that she didn't know how to fight. She didn't want to cause any trouble. She thought that her life would be over if she were kicked out of Temple.

Strictly speaking, she didn't really need my help.

I mean, she was a better fighter than me anyways.

Objectively speaking, in the current first-year combat ranking, Scarlett would be among the Top 5. Of course, Ellen would take first place with a wide gap between the first and second place. She might jump between the 2nd and 5th place, but Scarlett would definitely keep being among the best.

She wasn't able to do it because of her trauma caused by being bullied for all her life by a person, who she could defeat in a duel quite easily.

* * *

I was staying in the dormitory for today, as I was thinking of paying Eleris a visit tomorrow.

So I just started doing my usual training. Adriana said she'd leave today, so she only came by to train in the morning.

Everyone was excited for this holiday, so there were many students who were rushing to leave Temple.

Ludwig, who was still quite inexperienced, ran around Temple once a day every morning without fail. Of course, that was only possible for him. I still had a long way to go.

Originally, I didn't have any interest or talent in exercising. Now that I thought about it, I wasn't really enjoying it either. I just clenched my teeth and powered through because I felt a certain guilt. I wasn't allowed to rest. I had something to do, so I had to work hard.

That strong compulsion was the only thing that kept me going.

"Whew…"

However, after running for a while, at the place where Temple's Higher Education Department was located, I sat down on a bench on a hillside where one of the running tracks was. I was trying to catch my breath.

I could overlook the vast landscape of Temple from there. Even if I wasn't as strong as Ludwig, my stamina definitely improved by leaps and bounds. I was even able to climb these hills without much problems, even though I was still slightly out of breath.

"……"

There wasn't any event like a sudden explosive growth in stats or my overall performance. My supernatural ability awakened, but that didn't mean I suddenly had the power to flip the world upside down.

However, a short while ago, I wasn't even able to run properly without Adriana's support, but now I had enough stamina to run up a hillside and look down on all of Temple. It wasn't at the speed of an airplane or a car, but enough to feel my growth and the results of my training.

I was growing little by little. Obviously, this wasn't the fantasy life I was dreaming of.

My growth was rather slow, and even if the crisis was still far away, it was still definitely approaching.

"Phew…"

This felt more like a slice-of-life story than the one I actually wrote.

This was completely different from casually describing that a character suddenly became stronger after years or decades of training.

I had to fill these weeks, months and years with my own body.

It was up to me to work hard in these months I described in the novel.

"……I'm thirsty."

But let's first drink some water and continue to run.

* * *

I'm Type A.

"Come."

Type A was a preset setting specialized in close combat, namely swordsmanship and body strengthening.

-Kaang!

"Sigh…"

I sighed as I watched the sword slip out of my grasp.

"Train your grip strength."

"I am. I'm doing it to the point where I can't feel my hands anymore."

Even if I used my supernatural power, I keep losing grip of my weapon after taking a hit from her.

"Then use your ability."

"……I've been using it."

"Ah."

She was a master in making me feel small. I slumped on the floor as I picked up my training sword. My hands felt numb and I had a hard time holding my sword properly.

"Hey, isn't it strange?"

"What is?"

Ellen tilted her head at my words.

"I know because I felt it, but aren't you a lot stronger than the 3rd year I was barely able to defeat by luck?"

It was actually like that. I ended up like this even while she was going extremely easy on me. I could guarantee that if she had gone up against Mayarton that day, the duel would have been over in under 5 seconds. I wasn't exaggerating. That was Artorius, the greatest warrior of all mankind, for you. To be exact, she was even better in terms of talent than Ragan Artorius.

If nurtured properly Ellen Artorius would become even more of a monster than him.

"What of it?"

If you're strong, you're strong.

"I can understand that you don't gain much weight even after eating so much. There are people like that after all."

People with a super high metabolism or people with poor digestive efficiency. There were definitely people who wouldn't gain that much weight by eating a lot. I got up and pointed at Ellen's arms and wrist.

"What I mean is, how can you have that much strength when your body looks like this?"

Yes.

Mayarton was big. Ellen, however, wasn't muscular and, technically speaking, she had quite the slender build.

It was totally mysterious how she was able to generate such power from such a thin body. It was just so strange, physically speaking!

I disliked it even more, because I thought I knew the reason for that.

Of course, it was because of me.

Obviously… She was supposed to have the best talents in the world, ahd excellent skills and was a total munchkin, but I described her as a "Beautiful girl", which was why she looked the way she looked. There might be 188cm tall muscular beauties out there, but they wouldn't look like young girls, now would they? So that was why there was a kid in front of me with a height of 163cm and a weight of 40 kg with the strength of a human tank. This physical discrepancy was purely caused by my

unrealistic standards.

She seemed soft everywhere as if she had no muscles. In fact, the skin on her arms looked as smooth as a baby's, when they were supposed to be weathered and packed with muscles. She wasn't even toned. Actually, we had some body contact while we were training so I found out that she was all soft.

Of course, if one were to enter the superhuman stage, it was possible to have power that went far beyond what a normal human was capable of, using magic body enhancement…

However, she didn't know how to use that yet, so she was only using her body's strength.

Right.

I was god.

I broke the laws of physics of this world with just a few lines of text. Ellen frowned slightly at my grumbling.

"Our family is strong."

Ah.

Was the probability of that part just supplemented to that degree? Were your family's muscle fibers made out of adamantium wire or something?

Seriously, even if they were the strongest family in the world, this didn't make much sense.

I was born like that. What are you going to do about it?

In three words, it was blunt. Well, I had never made that kind of setting, but her family might be descendants of dragons or something. This was a world where the probability which I flipped on its head got supplemented.

In the end, it was me who violated the rules here, so I had no right to complain. I could just accept it. There was a limit to how much growth one could achieve through training alone, so one would supplement one's body using talents or skills.

If one were able to do this long term, one entered the superhuman stage through magic body enhancement.

“Hold it again.”

“Hm!”

-Kaang!

“……”

Are you playing baseball?

Seeing my training sword fly towards the other end of the gym, I felt dejected.

It wasn’t a homerun, but a hit.

CHAPTER 58

After my extreme training and sparring, Ellen left me alone and focused on her own training. Cliffman had returned home, so he wasn't at the gym today.

Cliffman was that type of guy to me.

An unknown guy I've encountered at the gym quite often.

When we met, he'd slightly greet me, but he didn't say a word. It was to the point where I'd notice when he wasn't there, but we weren't on talking terms yet.

-Hup!

Ellen was busy, beating up scarecrows and honing her techniques. Actually, there was no reason for her to spar with me. To be that girl's training partner one had to have a certain level of skill. To her, I was only a little kid just starting out.

I continued to cook dinner, but that wasn't such a big deal. I always ended up making too much for myself. That was all. Somehow, I kind of stopped being so strict in our cooking lessons and focused more on swordsmanship. She still looked after me, even after the duel was over though.

I mean, wasn't that strange?

I mean, I just wrote that letter for the sake of writing it, but still, she super dumped me. I was really curious what she was thinking about me, now that she was right in front of me.

In fact, I only wrote that love letter to get dumped and get some achievement points.

After that, we somehow ended up eating lunch together, then practiced swordsmanship and then ate dinner together.

However, Ellen didn't act particularly close to me, and neither did I act close to her.

To the extent that she would probably even ignore me even if we were to run into

each other on the street.

No, well, even the classmates who hated me like Erich, Cayer or even Harriet, would show some sort of disgruntled reaction when they'd see me, but she wouldn't even look at me?

We had late-night snacks and early morning snacks together almost every day. We'd meet each other every morning when we did our morning training and we even stuck around at the gym after school.

But we didn't really have any private conversations.

We seemed to be close, but we weren't really.

If we were to ever meet outside, I bet she would even ask me who I was.

However, she did try to be my champion in the duel.

She was always calm… I don't know…

However, when I meet up with her, I can't read her well…

It wouldn't kill me. I just would have to ask her right? I wasn't some dense main character from some novel nor was I expecting anything.

If one doesn't know something, one should ask.

It was that simple, right?

"Hey."

"Yes."

Ellen looked at me.

"Do you like me?"

"No."

"I see."

It didn't really hurt because I expected her to answer like that.

I really didn't care that much.

Really!

However, Ellen had a different reaction compared to last time. Ellen had a grim look on her face, turned towards me and asked me.

"Do you like me?"

"No."

"Okay."

Seeing as she didn't say something like "You told me you liked me some time ago though", she might have forgotten about that incident.

Anyway, seemed like we became close enough to ask about these things casually. I knew it would just be better to answer no to these kinds of things.

I didn't even mean to ask about that in the first place.

"Hey."

"Yes."

"Then are we friends?"

At my words, Ellen stopped swinging her sword and silently contemplated.

She took a minute or so.

Ellen opened her mouth again as she pointed her sword towards the scarecrow.

"I think so."

That was her answer.

* * *

So, it seemed like Ellen Artorius just recently seriously thought about whether we were friends or not for the first time. Hence, why it took some time for her to think about the answer.

That being said, calling Bertus my friend was a little strange, as it felt more like a hierarchical relationship. So, Ellen could be said to be the first friend I made in Temple. If you thought about it, it was rather funny. She was extremely taciturn, so it should have been the hardest to get closer to her. In fact, it would have taken her a long time before she made some friends in the original story.

However, knowing that Ellen didn't care about my reputation and didn't have any preconceived notions about me, was rather comfortable. As a result, we became like this.

After my stamina recovered I went back to my usual routine, namely posture and strength training.

Standard bedtime was at 11 o'clock. I would train at the gym until 9, then I would come out and have a late night-snack at the dining room, usually with Ellen.

So, Ellen and I both only trained until 9 so that we would still get to eat some food. We didn't decide on that, it just naturally happened like this.

It was now 9 o'clock.

It was time to stop the training.

"Aren't you overdoing it today?"

"Haah… Haah…"

Today, Ellen was a bit different from usual. Even if she didn't have the same amount of stamina as Ludwig, she still had almost as much. She had been beating the scarecrow without even taking time to catch her breath.

She was breathing roughly, and I could see that her whole body was covered in sweat. I noticed that she was training harder than usual.

I didn't want to be a cat that cared about tigers, but her condition was certainly a bit strange.

“Why don’t you stop and take a rest?”

“……I’ll train a bit longer.”

Ellen said that without even looking at me. Well, she said that we probably were friends, but sticking my nose in anymore would be weird. She might tell me not to pretend to be close or something.

“Then hurry up and go rest. I’m leaving.”

Ellen didn’t answer me as I left the gym.

* * *

Obviously, there were hardly any students left in the dormitory, and the ones that were still there probably went to sleep because it was close to curfew.

Come to think of it, Temple sure provided dream like living conditions.

They do the laundry, provide meals, give out pocket money, prepare whatever you might need and even give you a fully stocked kitchen you could use at your own convenience.

They also give you four gold coins as pocket money per month. Of course, it was just small change to kids from good houses, but it was a lot of money for me. If it was for personal training or research, they’d even give you additional support depending on its content. In other words, it was kind of like a research grant.

In fact, it wasn’t really important to graduate from Temple to live a good life. Actually, wasn’t one able to live a comfy and cozy life just by being a Temple student?

Wasn’t this a dream school no one would want to graduate from? Wouldn’t one want to live on as a Temple student until one died? This would lead to an infinite loop of procrastination.

Wasn’t this another setting error? One would want to continue attending Temple, and Royal Class, just for these benefits alone.

I went to the kitchen while having these weird thoughts.

Even though I didn't receive any more support in the form of divine power, I was still exercising a whole lot, even if it wasn't to the degree of Ludwig or Ellen. Hence I still had to eat a lot. I also felt like what I ate didn't really turn into fat.

I originally cooked for myself, but I definitely improved ever since I started living in Temple. There were a lot of ingredients, and if one needed anything specific, one could just ask for it and they would provide it right away.

I'd get tired of always eating the same thing, so I made this and that. I didn't want to live off of snacks like Ellen, so I tended to make my own food.

Someone who only lived from hamburgers and pizza would get tired of those one day.

Living life routinely was fine, but I didn't want my diet to follow a routine as well.

I looked through the ingredients kept in the kitchen pantry and thought about what I should make.

Well, this didn't really fit my concept, but…

Still, I was indeed grateful. Besides, this was a sensitive time for her as well.

I took out a bag of bread.

I was thinking of making some sandwiches.

There were two people in Temple I felt grateful to.

Adriana, who recently turned to the dark side and became like a church nun. No, calling a nun part of the dark side was a bit much, wasn't it? Well, that was how it felt to me anyways.

And Ellen Artorius.

To be honest, I often told Adriana that I was grateful to her, I didn't do the same with Ellen because of the nature of our relationship. It wasn't like she was doing anything unusual anyway, she just ate what I made and trained in the gym.

Ah. No matter how I tired to make it out to be, I was like nothing more than a high

schooler who was happy about having made his first friend.

A, actually… I think I felt a little touched…

I had to admit that.

I was kind of touched hearing that we were friends! How silly! Ah! I know!

I made some club sandwiches. I didn't have to put as much effort into those. I thought it would probably be better to make a lot because she'd probably end up eating a lot.

I put in a moderate amount of vegetables, plenty of cheese and ham. This could probably be called a calorie bomb, but neither I nor Ellen cared about these kinds of things. We exercised too much to die of hyperlipidemia.

I also found a food basket in the kitchen, so I packed the freshly made sandwiches in there and headed to the gym.

"……What?"

And I couldn't help but be a little surprised by the sight before my eyes.

Ellen was lying in front of the scarecrow, the remnants of a broken training sword lying next to her.

"Ah! You'll catch death if you sleep here!"

Although that was what I had said, I was running towards her.

* * *

Temple's Royal Class was one of the most intensive educational institutions of the Empire. Besides the ones I already mentioned there were numerous services provided for VIPs.

So, that kind of meant that I didn't know what they were specifically.

I just wrote something like: The service is great!

Of course, I knew some of the services. One of them was a priest dedicated to us, who could use recovery spells and was stationed in a specific place 24/7. It was like the nurse office teacher. The only difference from an infirmary teacher was that they could also heal severe injuries, and not just perform first aid.

I couldn't really remember, but I probably received that priest's help after that duel last time. I carried Ellen on my back and called for a priest.

I went to the recovery room, where I once lay, and laid Ellen down on the priestess' instructions. While casting some divine spells, the she asked me about the situation.

"What happened?"

"She looked exhausted or something like that. She was lying on the gym floor."

Other than the forehead being slightly wounded, she didn't seem to be seriously hurt. But she smashed her training sword, you know? Anyway, she didn't seem to have serious injuries.

"But I'm glad you were able to find her so quickly. Well done."

Even if she just passed out because of exhaustion, it might have gotten dangerous if she was found too late, so the priestess praised me.

She asked for my and Ellen's name and grade, so I answered.

"First year Reinhardt and Ellen. Mr. Epinhauser is your homeroom teacher, right?"

"Yes."

"Good job, Reinhardt. I'll write down a merit for you."

What.

I didn't think that would happen. The uniformed teacher looked at me with a kind smile. It was a benevolent smile that showed that she was a genuinely religious person.

Ooh, it really does feel divine. I can't. I'm sorry, I forgot about my roots…

“I heard you were a mess, but it seems you are very different from the rumors.”

Oh, my reputation had even reached the teachers. Anyway, she seemed to be quite impressed that I would carry my classmate on my back, contrary to the preconceived notions everyone had.

But there were things like merits? I didn’t even know those existed here.

The priestess checked on Ellen’s condition and said she would get up soon. She told me that I could go back, but I stayed by her side.

The teacher looked at me with a mischievous smile, as if she knew what I was thinking.

No, it wasn’t like that.

Just like the teacher told me, Ellen slowly opened her eyes after about 10 minutes.

“Urg…”

Ellen raised her eyelids, let out a low groan and turned to look at me and the priestess, then opened her eyes wide.

“……?”

She seemed bewildered.

That stone Buddha looked flustered.

It was such a precious scene, so I tried to immediately burn it into my memory.

“Ah…”

Ellen thought for a moment, before she seemed to realize what was going on.

“Hey, if you sleep in places like that, you might end up dead. You’re so young. Do you want to be reincarnated so badly? Tch.”

“Pffft!”

At my persistent words, the priestess burst into laughter and Ellen turned her head away from me. She clearly was very embarrassed right now. However, it wasn't just the two of us here. That teacher doubling as a priestess was also present.

"Ellen, even if he says that, Reinhardt still carried you on his back. He came in here with a totally pale face and said "Teacher, do something!" Isn't that right?"

"Te, teacher… Why did you say that…"

No, you idiot! How could you tell her? Ellen was glancing at me when she heard what the teacher said. You didn't think, I'd do that, huh?

"It seems like you practiced too hard. Don't overexert yourself. Understood?"

"Yes… I'm sorry."

With these words, the priestess left the recovery room, telling us that she would report this after the school closure.

"Why were you sleeping there on the floor?"

At my question, Ellen stared blankly at the ceiling.

"While I was practicing my techniques and beating the scarecrow, my training sword suddenly broke… I think I fell forward and hit my head because my balance was broken."

Ellen seemed to remember clearly how she fainted.

Exhaustion wasn't the problem, it was because she head-butted the scarecrow. It seemed like an acute concussion.

Come to think of it, wasn't that quite serious? No, that's not it. The reason probably was both exhaustion and the concussion.

I didn't know if someone would have carried her out if I wasn't there. Well, it was fine now, seeing that she was okay.

"Hey, didn't I save you then?"

"……"

"I did, didn't I?"

I did say that I'd let it go seeing that she was alright and all, but what if I didn't come back to share the sandwiches I made with her? She might have been found dead the next day.

The girl with the best talents this world could offer nearly ended up dying after head-butting a scarecrow…

How could there be such an absurd situation. Ellen lay down and looked at me quietly, before she nodded her head slightly.

"……Yeah."

It wasn't her usual voice, it was a little more subdued. How cute. Well, the charm of taciturn characters would appear when their concept collapsed.

Ellen definitely overdid it today. She continued to swing her sword without resting, on the contrary, she trained even more intensely.

Someone with usually good self-control went over her limits, and, in the end, after she tried to swing her training sword even after exhausting all her strength, she ended up hitting her head on the scarecrow.

No one else knew the reason why she would do something like that, but I knew.

This girl was in a more mentally shaken up state, completely different from her normal self.

So, I didn't ask her why she overdid it.

"Why don't you stand up?"

"……?"

Since she was treated with divine power, she should have completely recovered. There was no reason for her to continue to lie down.

“Let’s just eat some sandwiches. I made a lot.”

“Ah. Okay.”

Ellen jumped up. Look at her react right away when I mentioned food. I bet she would inhale all the food again.

“I made it for you, so you better be thankful.”

Of course, I didn’t forget to brag as per usual.

CHAPTER 59

“I want to shower.”

Ellen sniffed her body and said she wanted to go shower.

“If you go wash up, it’ll be past bed time, won’t it?”

There were a lot of things going on and before we knew it, it was almost 11 o’clock. Of course, not keeping the curfew wouldn’t be such a big deal, but if a superintendent found us while on their patrol, it would be a slight pain in the ass. Well, it wouldn’t be very likely, of course.

I wrote a lot of scenes where Ludwig wandered about past the curfew, after all.

“I hate this smell.”

Ellen was sweating profusely and seemed to hate that sticky feeling. She must have sweat more than usual. I felt how sticky she was when I was carrying her.

Even if I put the food in front of her now, she probably wouldn’t have the appetite to actually eat it because of the smell.

I decided to make a bit more than usual today. I thought Ellen would be rather depressed.

That was why I ended up making sandwiches, so that I could bring them to her.

“……Okay. Then let’s go down to the dining hall.”

I was planning on going to the dining hall, but Ellen shook her head.

“You might get caught by the teacher.”

Hm? What should we do then? You want to eat, but then we would end up going past the curfew and we’d be at risk getting caught by the superintendent, but she still wanted to eat after being so exhausted. What kind of greed was this?

“Can’t we eat in my room?”

Ah.

Did I hear that right?

* * *

Temple didn’t separate girls and boys into different dormitories, they just divided by class, so the boys could visit the girls’ rooms and the girls could visit the boys’ rooms. In Class B, they did it often to get together and hang out.

In Class A there seemed to be only a few cases of students visiting each other’s rooms.

How could they put men and women in the same dormitory, when they were very different? What if they made trouble?

The class parts were important, but the dormitory parts were also responsible for a huge amount of the narrative progression. If the dormitory were divided into male and female, I would have only been able to describe the male characters, as Ludwig, the main character, would live in the male dormitory.

I, as the writer, was responsible for this merge of male and female dormitories, so that I could induce certain incidents and spur on relationships to form. It would have been safer to just divide them, but that would have been pretty boring probably.

Just how could anything interesting happen in a dormitory full of guys? At best, they might wake up early in the morning and decide to play soccer or something.

Therefore, there weren’t any seperate dormitories for narrative purposes, not practical ones. I didn’t have to come up with realistic settings, just one’s I could use easily. So it became an integrated dormitory for this writer’s convenience.

Anyway.

I didn’t feel much when I entered the room of my classmate who was only a little kid from my point of view.

There was a 100% chance that this girl didn’t even think about the implications.

I might have gotten kind of nervous if she was a college student. If that were the case, I probably would be stiff and stuttering.

But even that wouldn't really work for me.

All the Temple students only felt like little kids to me!

I retrieved the basket of sandwiches from the gym and entered Ellen's room.

As soon as we entered her room, she went straight to the shower room.

-Shaaaaa…

I heard the sound of water coming from the shower, as I put the sandwiches on a table and sat down on a chair.

It wasn't much different from my room. Although the room smelled a bit different. Of course, it wasn't the smell of cosmetics or something.

The room was clean, as she didn't really spend much time here anyway.

There didn't seem to be many of her personal belongings in here. My room also was fairly empty, but not to that extent. Although, they might be on a similar level. I didn't have any personal belongings other than clothes and textbooks in my room either.

Rather than personal belongings, this room was filled with training equipment, probably intended for strength training, installed on Ellen's request. Our private rooms were spacious, so there was enough space for various training equipments. I had something similar in my room. The detailed composition was slightly different, but the larger framework seemed to be the same.

Overall, it was a nice room. The only thing that made one think that this is a girl's room was the slightly different smell.

However, although Ellen only had few belongings, she did have some.

In one corner of the room, the place where others might have their magic research table or something of that sort, there was a trunk. It was a rather long truck quite different from a normal one.

However, that trunk, painted black, was tightly sealed. It wasn't that big, so it seemed easy to carry around. It was a long rectangular case.

Although I shouldn't, I knew what was in there.

This was the only thing Ellen Artorius brought to Temple.

After waiting a little longer, Ellen came out of the shower room. She shook her wet hair and shivered slightly.

She wore a training suit and slippers.

Come to think of it, she always opted to wear either of those, so did I.

Either the school uniform or a training suit.

She sat on the other side of the table, facing me.

"Let's eat and then go sleep. I'm tired."

"Yes"

We started eating and stayed quiet as if everything had already been said. To be honest, the time I slept was the happiest time I spent these days, as my daily routine involved torturing my whole body.

There wouldn't be something happening, like a teacher suddenly bursting in. If anyone came in here, they might misunderstand why the two of us were in the same room and strange rumors might pop up. However, Royal Class and Temple were almost devoid of students and teachers at the moment, so nothing should happen.

We just silently ate our sandwiches.

It took quite a while to eat all of them though, because I made a lot.

-Craaash!

Thunder echoed outside the window followed by the sound of rain falling. Ellen stopped eating her sandwich and looked out the window.

“Are you done?”

“No.”

Ellen stared blankly out the window and continued to munch on her sandwich.

Seeing her so different from usual was slightly disturbing. I wrote the festival period only from Ludwig’s point of view, never from Ellen’s.

Therefore, I never described in detail what Ellen was feeling at the moment.

So I didn’t know how sad she must feel. Ellen stared at the pouring rain and the occasional flashes of lightning. Was she afraid of thunderstorms or did she like them? I didn’t even know that much. However, I didn’t think she was afraid.

Ellen wasn’t good with talking about herself.

Only if the object hidden away in the trunk got revealed would Ellen’s identity, which was only known to Bertus and a few teachers, be known.

“Reinhardt.”

“……Yeah?”

I was a little startled at her suddenly talking to me.

Ellen looked at me.

That was also the first time she called me by my name.

“Thanks.”

That was all she said to me, while her eyes rested on me. She wasn’t smiling at all, she also didn’t seem particularly blunt either. She wore an expression that seemed to be between those two.

I also felt like I was gradually becoming more proficient in reading her expressions.

I still wasn’t certain, but my proficiency would rise more and more.

“People sometimes feel like shit. There may or may not be a reason. That’s just how it’s supposed to be.”

Ellen stared at me sharply.

“Still, if you don’t talk about it, it will eat you up from the inside.”

It wasn’t good to suffer in silence. Although Ellen had a blunt personality, she also had her own thoughts and feelings. Just like how she appeared rather easy going at first, but eventually got mad and ended up teaching me swordsmanship.

Even the slightest bit of anger would sent me to a frenzy, while Ellen was able to maintain her composure no matter what.

In retrospect, Ellen and I were direct opposites. And in my experience, people who were the opposite of each other would get along better than people who were similar.

I talked too much and had a hot temper.

Ellen spoke very little and had a calm temperament.

In my opinion, that combination fit surprisingly well together. If two talkative people met each other, they’d just talk each other to death, if two silent people met, they’d just stay silent.

She might feel like shit, but I wondered what Ellen was thinking when I told her that it would be okay to talk.

Was she surprised I noticed that she felt depressed?

Ellen, who had been silent for a long time, slowly opened her mouth while blankly staring at the thunderstorm.

“If you could save the world in exchange for your life, do you think you should?”

It sounded nonsensical.

However, I knew the meaning behind that question.

Ellen thought that death was death no matter what one died for. Her brother saved the world but in the end she was the only one left behind. People adored Warrior Artorius, but in the end all Ellen could do was mourn her brother's death.

So, while Ellen did miss her brother, she also resented him.

Knowing that, I also knew what to say.

"Well… I wouldn't know until the time came, I guess."

As long as I wasn't confronted with such a situation head on, no matter what I said would be meaningless.

A person who said he'd never do something like that, might end up actually doing it, and a person who said one had to make that choice, might not necessarily choose to do it.

"I'd never die like that."

Even if she had the option to save the whole world in exchange for her own life, Ellen said, she would never make that choice.

She only had one life, and she said she'd never give it up, even if that would mean the end of the world as we know it. I looked at Ellen and nodded my head.

"Possibly so."

I knew that Ellen Artorius would risk her life for the world in the future though.

* * *

Ellen got up and walked towards the trunk. Without a word, Ellen removed the basket that contained the sandwiches before and placed the trunk on the table.

-Click, click

Ellen, who unlocked its lock, showed me the contents without saying a single word.

"……It's a sword. It looks quite unusual at that."

Inside was a long-sword type sword. It wasn't a too flashy color. It was simply black. Although that didn't mean it was just a simple sword.

In addition to smooth lines seeming like blood vessels, there were also ancient characters engraved upon it.

It was a language I shouldn't know, but I knew what was written on it. Just as I could read and speak this world's language, I could read even this language. I would even be able to pronounce it.

I actually never described what characters were engraved on the sword, so it was actually my first time seeing them.

[Forged through tears.]

I didn't know what that meant, but I knew well what kind of sword this was.

Ellen Artorius' Sword.

And prior to that, Warrior Ragan Artorius' Sword.

"This sword is called Lament."

"……"

This was a memento left behind by Ragan Artorius for Ellen before he participated in the Demon World War.

The Warrior Artorius was known to carry two divine swords.

The sword of Als, God of War, Alsbringer, and the sword of Mensis, the God of the Moon, Lament.

Alsbringer, which Ragan Artorius used to defeat the Demon King, became the Empire's national treasure. However, no one knew where Lament was, except for those that knew about Ellen Artorius' existence. Later, when Ellen's identity was revealed in the novel, Lament's whereabouts were also made clear.

Now Ellen revealed her true identity to me. Although it would be hard for someone to recognize the sword just by looking at it, everyone knew its name. Lament was

one of the two symbols representing Warrior Artorius after all.

“No wonder you were so strong.”

I, in fact, already knew about her real identity, so I was forced to act surprised. Ellen was satisfied enough with my reaction. She raised the corners of her lips slightly, creating a smile.

She hardly smiled properly. My heart felt like it was being swept away.

[Ellen Artorius has revealed her identity sooner than expected.]

[Achievement – Ellen’s Truth]

[You have earned 500 achievement points.]

In addition to that, I unexpectedly got some achievement points.

CHAPTER 60

Ellen didn't tell me to keep her identity secret. It seemed she thought that it wouldn't matter anymore now that she told me. Maybe she also thought I wouldn't tell anyone else.

Of course, if Ellen's identity were to be revealed there would be a huge commotion in Temple. I wouldn't want that to happen, so I didn't intend on spreading this info around. Still, Ellen did seem to feel a little better in the end.

Did she feel comforted knowing that she had someone who understood her feelings?

The next day.

-Aah, hello, dear citizens of the Imperial Capital.

-I'm here to introduce to you a fantastical item while you are all busy returning home.

-Please have a look at this. We carved this wood and inserted a metal core. Yes, in technical terms, this would be called a spinning top.

-But it isn't just any ordinary spinning top. It's a magic spinning top.

-I shall show you all a wonderful magic trick now.

I was on my way to the Al Ligar district taking the mana train. I saw some vendors from the Rotary Gang appearing on every train. The gang members seemed to safely evolve into vandors, showing great skills in marketing their products and saying a lot without much substance.

Parents who came to look holding their children's hands reluctantly bought them toys.

They did say their income was pretty good. However, this business wouldn't last long. The mana train was a public facility, but they couldn't just do as they pleased in here. There were quite a few passengers who seemed rather annoyed by all this even

though they didn't dare to speak up yet.

This business' purpose was to create a different profit structure to resolve the gang's dependency on the Thieves' Guild. However, Bertus suggested that it would be better for us to just absorb the Thieves' Guild. That plan was on hold for now though.

"Heey."

"Ah… Yes?"

"Who gave you permission to do business here?"

One of the passengers finally started complaining, perhaps finally having reached the limit of his patience.

It was a rather tense situation. I strongly advised Loyar to tell the vendors to avoid getting into fights in these types of situations. Fights should never ever break out.

The man approaching the vendor looked rather disgusting.

"Didn't I tell you that if I see you on this line again, I'd whoop your ass?"

However, as I listened closer, the context of the situation seemed to be a little different from what I thought.

"Tha, that… But we were here first…"

"Ah, when would that have been? We said we'd do this place. Huh?"

What kind of situation was this?

"Ye, yes. I'll get off at the next station…"

"Don't show your ugly mug in front of me again. Ya hear?"

I roughly grasped the situation.

The flies started swarming after smelling some honey.

"So there were bastards with no sense of morality like this, huh? No matter how

illegitimate this business is, you just go ahead and steal someone else's way to make a living?"

"……Wha, what?"

Even though I wasn't one of the vendors, I stood up and confronted him.

"You, what? Who are you? What do you want, little brat…"

I approached that disgusting looking man. The passengers were staring blankly at this bizarre situation that seemed to be about to get out of hand.

There actually was a passenger who clashed with this gangster without any hesitation.

"Hey, jerk. If you enter a business late, shouldn't you do it quietly in your own little corner? Huh? If you enter such a business, d'ya think you can just take your seniors' know-how and then piss all over their livelihood? You wanna fucking die?"

"Y,y,you… You punk, wha, what's wrong with you… Who the hell are you?"

"What do you mean? I'm a student of Temple's Royal Class who happened to be an ally of justice."

While attending school a student of Temple's Royal Class is treated as someone with a special identity, no matter if they were a commoner or not. If you were to touch one of them carelessly, there would be no end to the trouble you would find yourself in.

The vendor, one of the gang members, flinched after realizing my identity.

He didn't know me personally, but he seemed to have remembered that one of the gang members went to Temple.

"Sure, you're from Temple. I don't give a fuck, you shitty brat."

He didn't believe me when I told him I was a Temple student.Thinking I was bluffing, that bastard immediately decided to give me some true education.

He raised his right hand up high and swung it towards my head.

-Woosh!

I avoided the punch by slightly tilting my head.

“Have you gone deaf, you old bastard?”

I was strong.

Stronger than that slimy bastard.

“How dare you try to beat up a minor without any reason, huh?”

-Pang!

“Urk!”

I kicked him hard against his shin. I didn’t kick him so hard that his leg would break, but it certainly pointed in a weird direction.

“Motherfucker, you think, just because I’m a shrimp at Temple, I’d also be a shrimp here?”

Even if one were the lowest ranked athlete in the Olympics, one was still a top athlete, you bastard!

I was someone that sparred with the ace of the national team every day, you know!

While I didn’t have any skills, I won using brutal methods.

However, now I could beat someone coming at me with brutality using my skills.

These were the results of Ellen’s accelerated education.

The passengers were initially nervous when they saw a gangster arguing with a vandor.

And then suddenly, a young kid stood up against that gangster, which confused them, and when they actually saw that young lad beat that gangster up, they seemed to doubt their eyes.

My physical strength and reaction speed certainly had improved through the training I did so far. If I threw my supernatural ability into the mix, even clumsy movements would be effective in beating someone like that.

Since he let his guard down, it was quite possible for me to make him to land on his ass with just a single kick.

Since I didn't want to do something as risky as brawling more with an adult, I threw him out at the next station.

"Ooh!!"

"I'll let you off for now, consider yourself lucky. If you were unlucky, you might end up eating food through a straw, you get me?"

His eyes were as big as saucers as I threw him out. That situation just seemed ridiculous to him.

The passengers were staring at me as if I was a monster.

"Sigh."

I didn't mean to interfere.

However when I saw that guy trying to take away our business, I changed my mind.

I thought I'd only ever beat up some guys in Temple.

I was becoming more and more like some sort of bastard, now that I had the grounded confidence provided by my supernatural power. The gang member was puzzled seeing me here.

"Please, tell big sis that I'll stop by later."

"A,ah… Ye, yeah."

Bring it on, you bastards.

Who were they to try and take away our livelihood?

My temper had been triggered, and I kept on growing more angry. People avoided me that day.

* * *

After getting off the train, I changed into clothes I had prepared beforehand and changed my appearance with Sarkegaar's ring. It seemed that no one was tailing me, but I should be getting tailed a lot in the future, so I tried making this a habit. My identity as a demon was problematic, but my identity as a Rotary Gang member wasn't without problems either.

That ruckus on the train just now was still acceptable. Those two who actually knew my affiliation with the Rotary gang were actually the most dangerous to me, as they would keep an eye on me.

Let's just live like water. I was already famous for being a delinquent in Temple, that wouldn't make me famous for that outside though, right?

After passing through various alleys and side streets, I headed to the Al Ligar Shopping District. That Cutthroat's Paradise was still filled with the sound of breathtaking price negotiations.

The battle of nerves between those that didn't want to be ripped off and those that wanted to rip them off went on like background music.

When I entered Eleris' shop, I saw her sitting in the same position as when I first met her.

She still had no customers.

"Eleris."

"Huh? How do you…"

Eleris was using a pseudonym in this shop, so she couldn't help but panic when someone suddenly called her by her real name.

"It's me."

"Your Highness?"

She first wanted to question me, a stranger who knew her real name, but she soon realized who I was and jumped up from behind the counter. Then she came towards me, and locked the store behind me.

“Hey, it’s dangerous coming to see me.”

Eleris spoke reproachfully towards me while I stood there frozen for a bit.

“I was really careful, so it’s fine.”

I didn’t get off at this district’s station, disguised myself and came here using lots of detours. If someone found me even after all that, that person would have my praise.

Eleris told me that she still didn’t feel at ease and chanted something. Only after that she slowly nodded her head.

“Yeah, it should be fine.”

Then she smiled brightly, as if that put her heart at ease.

“It’s been a long time since I last saw you, Your Highness. How have you been?”

“Ah… This and that happened.”

Eleris went up to me and pulled my hand, saying we should slowly talk over tea.

The vampire’s low body temperature felt reassuring somehow.

* * *

“Ah…”

After hearing all of my recounts, Eleris’ complexion, which was already quite pale, became even paler.

“Oh, should I say it’s like you were before… No, you’re still doing better than back then, but…”

Even if I wasn’t as bad as the original owner of this body, It still seemed to be very shocking.

Well, of course it would be. I entered Temple with no backing whatsoever and ended up chasing around the other kids. Not only that, I even had a duel with my senior, which resulted in the other seniors taking note of me

Well. For the Prince of the Demon Realm to infiltrate the Royal Class and actually turn into a star in a matter of weeks, sure was a headache, huh?

“I’m not really into getting beat up without even putting up a fight, so I didn’t just pick fights for no reason.”

“Sigh… Just what should we do about that temper of yours?”

Eleris sighed heavily as if all the world’s problems were riding on her shoulders.

“Still, I haven’t used this yet.”

I took out the relic Eleris gave me, the Flame of Tuesday.

“That’s a relief, but…”

I seriously wondered what would happen if I were to use this properly, but there had yet to be an emergency, so I couldn’t use it yet. Eleris rummaged through something and asked me if I was hungry before she took out some food.

“What? You have food here?”

“Yes, I stored up some frozen food, in case you might come by.”

Oh.

She was so nice.

Eleris heated the frozen pasta with her magic and presented it to me. It wasn’t that delicious, but she told me that she prepared it herself, so this was something that went beyond just taste.

Watching me slurp up the pasta, Eleris smiled faintly.

“By the way, I could have never imagined you getting a supernatural power.”

“That’s how it is. It’s like it was meant to be.”

Eleris seemed rather confused about the fact that I had awakened a supernatural ability, then I explained more about my ability. I had a lot to explain as it was a rather ambiguous ability.

““It… Seems to be a very powerful ability… Quite, uhm…”

“I know.”

The mechanism of my ability to actually end up winning if I just kept a winning mentality seemed rather strange to Eleris.

That wasn’t all.

I now had 2280 achievement points. I used up 20 achievement points during the duel to use the Revise Function. I got 600 points for winning the duel and after Ellen told me her secret I got 500 more points.

Therefore, I could get a new talent. I couldn’t have more than 1 supernatural power, so I was pondering about what talent to get next.

Although I was growing quite slowly, objectively speaking, what I did was quite nonsensical.

After entering the first year of Temple, I would be able to awaken two talents in less than a semester. People might feel suspicious of the existence of my infinite aptitudes, but it certainly wasn’t impossible.

At this point, it was rather hard for me to decide whether I should get a combat-related or a magic-related talent.

Talking about Temple like that made me seem like a son coming home from a boarding school and telling his mother about everything he experienced there. Actually, Eleris’ expression seemed rather similar to that of a mother’s. Especially her sighs when she heard about the fights I was in.

“That’s all I got to say for now. Is everything okay on your end?”

“Hmm… There had been a few things going on.”

It seemed like something had happened while Eleris was guarding the store.

“First of all, coming here was very dangerous.”

“I know that.”

That was why I did such conspicuous movements by going around town in weird circles to shake off any possible tail I might have had.

“That’s not it.”

However, at my words, Eleris just shook her head.

“It has been determined that this was the last place Your Highness had been seen.”

“Huh… Really?”

I didn’t know if it was Bertus or Charlotte, but my pursuers knew that I had come to this place. It was inevitable for me to come to this district to wander around here and sell my scrolls. A kid was wandering around here trying to sell scrolls, but most merchants just thought they were fakes. It certainly wasn’t a common occurrence, so there should have been some merchants who remembered that incident.

I originally planned to get some money and then go into hiding. Meeting Eleris was a pure coincidence after all.

“Did they come in here as well?”

“Yes. They didn’t seem suspicious of me, but they do keep an eye on this place as this is the only place where they were able to find some clues.”

The only place I was spotted at was the Al Ligar District’s shopping street. That was the reason why the one’s searching for me kept an eye on this place.

It wasn’t someone tailing me who was the problem, but the fact that the Al Ligar shopping street itself was already under surveillance, so that was why Eleris told me that it was dangerous coming to visit her.

“And then I heard about it.”

“About what?”

“I heard that you stole a fireball scroll from a store… I heard it was from Mr. Borton’s scroll store. I believe they got specific clues from there. Was it perhaps that scroll Your Highness was going to sell me?”

Ah. I thought I knew what she was talking about.

“I didn’t steal it, he gave it to me.”

“What? Mr. Borton was so furious, saying it was you who stole the fireball scroll.”

“That bastard is really a gangster among gangsters.”

Eleris didn’t seem to know what I was talking about.

“No, see, I was trying to sell Demon Scrolls, right? So everyone I was trying to sell it to thought they were pretty realistic fakes. That’s what a normal person would think, right?”

“Yes.”

“All the others just told me to shut up and get lost, but do you want to know what that guy told me?”

“What did he say?”

Eleris tilted her head.

“He told me to copy real scrolls and that he’ll pay me a lot of money. There would be no one as bad as that guy. I felt like I was stuck in a weird dream. so I asked him to give me a sample. That was that fireball scroll.”

Eleris frowned a little after listening to my explanation.

“…….I never really thought of him like that, but he certainly seemes like a bad person. He even lied about that scroll being stolen…”

As if genuinely disappointed in him, Eleris shook her head. No, I didn’t think there were any decent people doing business in this shopping street, though? What was

there to be disappointed about?

“People who buy these fake scrolls thinking they would save their lives might actually die. Just how did he think of that…?“

Magic Scrolls were expensive. I still didn’t know how much adventurers earned, but an Adventurer Party, which didn’t have a wizard among them, bought scrolls like these in case of an emergency. So what if that scroll simply didn’t work if such a crisis occured? They’d die 9 out of 10 times.

So that Borton guy was actually like an MVP among all the evil bastards of this shopping street. Eleris looked at me and smiled.

“Well done, Your Highness. Someone like that should be subject to a bit of suffering.”

“Needless to say, he just got overly excited and gave me that thing on his own.”

Blinded by greed, he couldn’t see the forest for all the trees and gave me a fireball scroll. It was a real shame that his greed and intelligence weren’t quite proportional. He was a scammer, stupid and would never amount to anything big.

Anyway, since this was the last place I was seen in, I could understand Eleris’ concerns.

“Tch, I was planning on staying here while the school was closed.”

“Isn’t Temple much more comfortable?”

Eleris didn’t seem to understand why I wanted to come to a place like this. I had this ring so I didn’t have to worry about getting caught.

“It’s because you are here.”

“Ah… I, is that so? Thank you, Your Highness:”

Eleris smiled and nodded her head.

“I confirmed that there were no people watching this place at the moment. So I think it would be fine for you to spend some days here, if you want.”

I didn't absolutely need to become a swordmaster or have supernatural abilities, or something.

After all, the most convenient thing in this world was magic. I was trying to work out a plan before on how to convince Eleris to let me stay here for a bit, and I didn't want to just play around while Temple was closed.

"By the way, about the Rotary Gang. Looking at that situation earlier, it seemed like there's a similar organization making their rounds. Do you know about this?"

"Is that so? Loyar doesn't really tell us about the gang's internal affairs, unless it's very serious."

It wasn't an organization they planned on creating anyway. It was just created naturally as they lived their lives on the street, so, although Loyar was in charge of this group's finances, she didn't seem to discuss the operation of the organization with the others.

"It seemed like it's time for us to gather again."

We didn't hold something like regular meetings, but as I had similar thoughts I nodded my head.

CHAPTER 61

That night.

“Your Highness. Are you sleeping?”

“Not yet.”

I was lying on the bed and Eleris was sitting on a chair by the bedside. I felt rather complicated about falling asleep like that, but it wasn’t like I hated that subtle feeling.

“What’s the matter, do you have something to say to me?”

“……”

Eleris said neither yes nor no to my question. After being silent for a while, Eleris quietly opened her mouth.

“I don’t think humans are better than demons.”

What was she talking about? Eleris was staring at me. The vampire’s red eyes were filled with sorrow.

“In the first place, Demons were a mix of many different races while humans had always been one singular race.”

I didn’t know who was inferior or worse of. There were many demons with superior racial characteristics. However, while they were physically superior to humans, they might lack intelligence, and there might even be races that lack both. There would also be races that were superior in both these aspects.

At my musings, Eleris shook her head.

“That isn’t what I mean.”

“Then?”

“I told you that I do not believe that humans are better than demons.”

“Oh. That’s what you meant.”

“Yes.”

Eleris seemed to think that it was more fortunate that the demon side lost, but in fact, she just didn’t like war in general. Eleris was a traitor to the demons.

“Humans are a race that knows the meaning of prosperity.”

Eleris must have watched the Demon Realm continuously increasing their arms, only thinking about war. However, humans were a race that was able to focus on life itself. When Eleris came to the Capital and saw this scene, it seemed that she didn’t want this world to be destroyed.

The Demon Realm was a world driven by just a single goal: A war with the humans, and Eleris simply didn’t like that mindset.

“But humans also fight and kill each other.”

However, humans also engaged in wars and slaughter among themselves. Eleris hated the Demon Realm, but she knew that even the Human Realm had such sides to it. In the end, did Eleris think that human society was the lesser of two evils?

She didn’t think humans were better than demons.

“So sometimes there are moments when I get fed up with the human’s wickedness.”

“Like with that swindler?”

“You could use that as an example, yes.”

Someone who played with someone else’s life just for money. That could also be regarded as a great example for the wickedness of human beings. But Eleris didn’t seem to talk about that.

Eleris was silent for a while.

What was she thinking about? Eleris was still trembling.

“Your Highness…”

“What’s wrong? Did something happen?”

“Tomorrow… You’ll find out tomorrow…”

Was she unable to tell me herself? She didn’t say anything more to me.

* * *

The next day.

I went to the Rotary Gang with Eleris. The meeting place was the same as before. A large cavity inside the drainage channel.

It had rained a while ago, so the sound of running water was noisily echoing around the cavity.

Loyar was silently staring at the bonfire. I contacted her in advance. Sarkegaar had also arrived. While Eleris was busy applying sound proofing magic, Sarkegaar approached me and hugged me fiercely.

“I always believed it! I always believed Your Highness would awaken a powerful ability! You have inherited the bloodline that possesses every quality found in this world! I hope that you will dedicate yourself to training, grow as fast as possible and rain the wrath of the Demon Realm on those cowardly humans…”

“Don’t be so loud. I think my ears are going to bleed.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

He was always such a talkative guy. I thought it would have been more effective if that guy had that winning mentality supernatural power. He still believed that I would become the great overlord of the Demon Realm. Well, for now I’d just stay still.

I didn’t have to say twice that I had awakened a supernatural ability, because Eleris convened a short meeting yesterday and delivered the rough details to them.

“Don’t you think, you stand out too much? I heard you were going around, beating up

students and you even went ahead and had a duel?"

I was dumbfounded by Loyar's words.

"If one sows wind one shall reap a tempest, you know? He was such a cowardly bastard. So I just had to stomp his face into the ground."

When I described how I made that guy surrender, Loyar's and Eleris' expressions were quite a sight.

"You were also born with the wonderful qualities of a monarch. That ruthlessness! Such pride! Such a strong fighting spirit! All of them are virtues of a great monaaaaaarch!"

"Oh! That's the stuff!"

"Your Highneeeeeeess!"

When I responded to his rhetorics this time, Sarkegaar decided to express his admiration with his whole body.

"I'm just worried that you're relying on violence too much…"

As Eleris said so, Loyar also let out a sigh.

"And I head you beat up a gangster on the mana train yesterday."

"A gangster?"

Eleris' eyes widened as if that was the first time she was hearing that. I didn't tell her because I thought she'd just nag me. It seemed like Loyar wanted to nag me for what I did outside as well.

However, I also had something to say about that.

"No, if one wants to get into someone else's business, wouldn't it be up to them to find a different area to start? But there that bastard was, trying to sit down in an already made bed. No matter how immoral the business, if someone tried to take away someone else's business, they still had to pay the price."

That idiot just came and said: “From now on we’ll do this here, so shut up and get lost!” No fucking way would I let that happen.

Loyar stared at me with wide open eyes.

“Even though you do have a supernatural ability, but I have to say, Temple’s education’s pretty great. You’ve been there for only some time and you’re already able to defeat a grown man.”

Was she being sarcastic right now? Did she mean I only learned how to fight at school? Huh? Right?

“That’s true.”

To put it bluntly, there’d be no way for someone who studied at the best mixed martial arts center of the world to get beat up by a simple street fighter, you know? Of course, I also had my supernatural ability and my opponent was really careless.

Of course, they’d still be pretty young, but those Royal Class’ 5th and 6th years with combat talents would be able to beat up anyone that came at them when they entered society. Even if the reason was part because of their talent, Temple wouldn’t raise them sloppily either.

“Anyway, how come you tell us not to fight those guys, but you end up fighting them?”

I told them to not fight on the train because we’d have to stop doing business if they were to come up with sanctions.

“I didn’t mean that you should leave those robbers alone. Who told you to hold it in while someone was casually trying to steal your business?”

If someone were to be about to steal something from you, you should properly defend yourself.

“So, does this happen a lot?”

When I sat down next to her and asked, Loyar nodded.

“Our gang started a new business and it seemed like there were rumors circulating that it was going pretty well. So there were either those who didn’t care or those who

started to copy it.

Mana trains were public spaces, so it was unavoidable that a certain group of people saw our guys sell things there. So, seeing that, it was only natural that they'd start thinking: "Huh? Should I try doing that as well?".

Hence, there were some who started doing it individually and some who started doing it on an organizational level.

"So those who are part of organizations usually plant some people on the train to drive other vendors away."

"Brilliant bastards… Like that they shut down this business altogether."

In fact, it was already bad enough that there were people placed on the trains who purposefully try to scare away others. If the other passengers started to file complaints, it would only be a matter of time before security guards were deployed. Then no one would be able to do business there anymore.

Those who tried ruining their competition would eventually end up ruining the whole business. I told Loyar before that they shouldn't fight, so it seemed like she was just observing the situation.

She was always complaining, but didn't she actually follow my orders quite well? Was she a real dog?

"Is it possible to track down their organizations and destroy them?"

I couldn't believe that the various vendors on the mana train would have some sort of power fight. Only these types of absurd situations were happening around me recently.

"It won't work… To begin with the gang members aren't any good in a fight."

Homeless people and beggars gathered here and even if they were capable to do bad things in order to stay alive, they weren't a match for organizations that gathered actually powerful people.

"In the end, I would have to make a move , but as you know, it's already pretty well known that I'm form this place. If I were to destroy every single one, that might

cause some friction with the guards, and if I were to be taken in that might have negative consequences for you as well."

Loyar was a Lycanthrope after all. If she were to be caught by the guards, chances were high that that would cause problems, and if it did, those problems would eventually lead to me. Bertus said he'd look after me, but if Loyar was found out to be a demon, this situation would certainly turn rather strange.

"Hmm… This is difficult."

Eventually, those violent gangs will try to monopolize this business to the point where they catch the attention of the guards, which would lead the entry of vendors to be completely blocked.

If we continued to sit on our hands, we'd find ourselves out of business soon, but if we took action, that would involve a huge risk.

"Can't you do something with magic?"

I asked Eleris if she couldn't do something with magic, that universal cheat. She answered immediately.

"…First of all, I don't particularly like violence. Furthermore, if violent incidents using magic occurred, they would get investigated more intensely and the sanctions would also be much higher compared to just a simple gang war. Another method would be to make them my kin, but as I said before, that would be rather dangerous."

If someone were to commit assault or murder using magic, the Empire would obviously conduct intensive investigations. Magic was a dangerous force that could lead to massacre if left in the wrong hands after all. Likewise, turning them into Eleris' kin would be even more risky.

"Your Higness. If you plan on killing all of them, you can leave it to me."

Sarkegaar stared at me with sinister smile on his lips. Certainly, he had the ability to completely transform, so he'd be able to attack the gangsters without leaving a single trace.

Of course, Eleris' face immediately turned blue.

“Are you going to cause a genocide in the middle of the Empire? Regardless of whether that would actually work or not, I’ll never allow that.”

Moreover, hearing that guy use the word “killing” so casually was seriously eerie. At times like these I felt like he was a real bastard, giving me goosebumps.

Even if they were sickening, that didn’t mean they deserved to be killed. Still, we needed to do something…

“Hm.”

While we were thinking about this problem, Loyar suddenly stood up. Then she started heading out of the cavern.

“What? Where are you going?”

“I think there’s a commotion outside. I’ll go take a look real quick.”

A commotion?

* * *

Sarkegaar and Eleris stayed behind in the cavern, while Loyar and I, who was part of the Rotary Gang, went out. Eleris told me to just stay with her, but I felt like I had to check what was going on outside.

Going outside, I could see all the gang members gathered together. As I pushed through the crowd, I found myself in front of Daibun.

“What’s going on?”

“Big sis? Oh, Reinhardt? When did you get here?”

“Just now.”

“Never mind. Who are they?”

“That’s…”

Across our gang members, stood dozens of men staring at us.

“That’s him, bro!”

And, a guy that seemed quite familiar to me pointed at me. Obviously, he was that asshole that wanted to touch one of our gang members on the train, but then got beat up by me. The guy whom he called ‘bro’ hit that idiot’s head and shouted at him.

-Pa!

“Urk!”

“You frickin bastard. You were beaten by a kid like that?!”

“Tha, that… Even though he looks weak, he’s actually hella strong!”

It seemed like he guessed I was a member of the Rotary Gang and came all the way here to get revenge. Loyar looked at me with a reproachful look as if I caused some exceptional mess.

The one they called bro looked at me and then at Loyar.

“Are you the famous Irene’s Wild Dog? This is our first time meeting, huh?”

“Yeah. What’s your business?”

“I heard that your young friend over there hit my brother in front of everyone. Is that right?”

“Ah, that’s what I heard.”

Loyar was staring at him intently as if she wanted to say: “So what?”.

“Although I do believe that this idiot who ended up getting beat up by a young kid is at fault here… We also have something called a face.”

“Who are you supposed to be anyway?”

At Loyar’s question, he clapped in an excessive manner. What a bad guy.

“Ah, sorry about the late introductions. Have you heard of Seven Stars?”

Wasn't Seven Stars a cigarette brand?

No.

"I'm Argent, the commander of Seven Stars' Assault Squad."

Not that Seven Stars. Were they supposed to be the Chilsung-pa?

(T/N: Also means Seven Stars. It's a syndicate based in Busan)

CHAPTER 62

Looking at that guy who introduced himself as Argent, commander of the Seven Stars' Assault Squad, Loyar sighed slightly.

"The Seven Stars Gang based in the Al Ligar district? Yeah, I've heard of them."

The Rotary Gang was an information-gathering group. Therefore, it seemed that they already knew about that organization called the Seven Stars.

So, I beat up a member of the Chilsungpa, who are active in the Yongsan District, on the train.

"Then you should know what would happen to someone who assaulted a member of the Seven Stars, right?"

"Well, it sure is a shame though. This all happened because the Seven Stars' members are just too weak that they even get beat up by a kid."

Having no intentions to apologize to them, Loyar spoke quite sarcastically. Hearing her words, Argent's as well as his other members' expressions distorted into an ugly grimace.

"Ah, he was so weak that he tumbled right out of the train."

Of course, I couldn't stand that guy either, so I butted in a bit. He'll regret it if he was going for a deal here.

"Hah… I guess you don't quite understand the situation here. Don't you take the Seven Stars' members too lightly? I came here to talk it out to give you some face, but I guess…"

"It's you who doesn't quite get the situation, you bitch."

When I suddenly swore at that guy without hesitation, not only the gangsters' across from me, but Loyar's pupils slightly shook.

“Wha, what?”

“Did you come here knowing that I was a student of Temple’s Royal Class fully supported by the Empire?”

As I kept on rambling, my thoughts jumped into a completely different direction.

“Temple?”

He might not know about the Royal Class, but there was no one in the Imperial Capital that didn’t know what the word “Temple” meant.

“Oh, yeah. You might not believe it. but yeah, I’m a student with supernatural abilities, so I entered the Royal Class.”

I smiled looking at them with my arms crossed.

“Did you know that you’d get locked up for touching even ordinary Temple students for no reason? But I’m actually part of an Elite Class.”

Temple students were basically from very wealthy families or families of high status. Therefore, Temple students weren’t only guaranteed certain special treatment inside of Temple but even outside of it, and their absolute safety inside of the Capital was taken very seriously.

The Empire was most careful about the students’ safety, as them coming to harm or being murdered would put major scratches on Temple’s reputation and reliability.

So what would they do if a student of Royal Class, who they nurtured with all their might, came to harm?

I walked towards them and held out my cheek.

“Hey, hit me.”

“Wha, what?”

“If you’re curious about what the guards would do with that organization called Seven Stars or whatever, after you dared to slap a Royal Class student, go ahead, hit me, bitch.”

I had no intention of fighting.

Rather, I asked him to hit me. I even had the intention of holding out my right cheek after he slapped my left. More than ten of them faltered as I stepped closer and approached them.

“The, these bastards don’t have the means to send a child to Temple…”

Argent muttered in disbelief as I pulled out a metal card from my pocket.

“This is a Temple Student ID card. Would you like to take a closer look?”

Of course, I had my Student ID with me. When they saw it, they seemed to be certain that I was a Temple Student even though they didn’t know what the Royal Class was.

Those guys would know well enough that they’d shoot themselves in the foot if they harmed a Temple student.

“What sort of bastard are you?”

Thinking he was angry, I saw him lifting up his hand to perhaps slap me.

His judgement was flawed.

The bastards who would never make it in life were the ones who threw their fists using their instinct rather than their heads. If one were level-headed, one wouldn’t live like that.

-Whoosh!

I quickly lowered myself to avoid the incoming hand while quickly jumping up to hit his crotch with my knee.

I used my trademark technique, Nut Cracker.

“Kuh… Kuaaaark!”

“You’d seriously hit me just because I told you to?”

He grabbed his crotch and collapsed to the ground.

Was it because I got used to Ellen's attacks? His attack was very slow, so I didn't have to use my supernatural power to avoid it. Everyone was so dumbfounded they froze up for a while.

"Let's beat up that bastard!"

The guys behind him ran up to me.

-Pang!

Suddenly, Loyar blocked their way and punched those guys running towards me square in the face.

* * *

There was no need for the other gang members to interfere.

Loyar literally beat up ten sturdy men with her short figure. It took less than ten seconds for the situation to be sorted out.

-Uh, uurg…

"Uwah…"

Not only me, but the other gang members who were watching the situation were staring at Loyar, who was wiping her palms with a blank look on her face, as if they rarely got to witness something like that.

She was so cool! Brilliant! Before I knew it, all the gangsters were already defeated.

"If you think I can't take care of you guys, then you're mistaken. It's not that I can't, I just didn't want to."

Loyar trampled on that babbling bastard's, Argent's head and spoke cooly. Her saying that after having proven herself in this one-vs-many fight was hella thrilling.

"Drag them all inside. People are watching."

Loyar thought those dazed bastards were a bad sight for those passersby, so she headed towards the sewers, telling us to bring them with us.

The gang members picked them up from the ground and took them in one by one. Those that struggled got beat and tied up by the members. Daibun aside, the other gang members seemed like they couldn't believe that I overpowered the assault squad leader with a single hit, even if I hit a vital spot.

"What are you going to do?"

Loyar seemed to ask me for my opinion. Though what she meant was: "If you start something, take responsibility for it".

Yeah, no problem.

I'll take responsibility, alright.

"Hey."

I looked at Argent, who was still writhing in pain even while tied up.

"Urg… How dare you, you brat… Do you think you'll get away with this…?"

It seemed like he still didn't understand the situation. They were probably planning to take further revenge.

"Just take it easy, okay? You're pretty ignorant, aren't you? You were trying to beat up a noble just now."

He didn't seem to know what it meant to touch a Temple student, so I tried to explain it in a way even idiots would understand. Even if our status was a little different from actual nobles, Temple guaranteed their students the same level of safety a nobleman of the Empire would enjoy.

So he basically tried to hit a noble. Hearing those words, his expression turned weird. He didn't seem to understand what I was trying to tell him.

"How about I just go up to the guards patrolling around the streets and testify that some group called Seven Stars from the Al Ligar District tried to attack me? I have no idea what you guys have been up to up until now, but I doubt you did anything you could be proud of. So, do you have any idea what would happen next?"

I wasn't completely sure where that organization Seven Stars was located in the

Yongsan District, but Loyar or Daibun should know. This was an information collection group after all.

Then the dude seemed to realize that trying to beat up this naughty bastard, which was me, was meaningless, even if he tore apart this whole organization.

Presumably, there was the possibility that the guards would launch an investigation into Seven Stars just by my request. I wasn't just a regular student, I was part of the Royal Class. The mere fact that I encountered danger in the Capital would have the guards on high alert.

If I died, that would literally be a disaster.

And they were an illegal gang to begin with, right? So the guards would try their hardest to catch these guys no matter what. Partly to improve their performance evaluation.

That guy just wore a bitter smile, not knowing what to say. I didn't know if this was a matter of pride or something.

I just put my hand on the tied up man's shoulder.

"Still, bro, it's a society we live in after all. Right?"

Not only that guy, but Loyar as well, seemed sullen after hearing me say that it was a society we had to live in together. It seemed like they wanted me to quit spouting bullshit and get to the point.

"What benefit would it have for me to ruin your organization using such extreme measures other than being able to do our business in peace, bro? I get it. I really get it. It's only natural that you'd get angry if some young guy comes out of nowhere and swears at you while you're only trying to make a living. Now, I don't know how many people I can mobilize with my words alone, but if I told you it would be enough for dozens of people to mysteriously die, wouldn't that be rather scary?"

Suddenly, his expression started to twist strangely, while I was acting like an adult. No wasn't that even more annoying? Some high schooler patting his shoulder after kicking him in the balls and saying that he understands everything?

However, the important thing was the part where I could send everyone to jail or get

them killed with just a single word.

“If you agree to this simple thing, I could just let this go. Let’s just forget about each other, huh? Let’s just live in peace, in peace. We just want to do business without anyone’s interference. Look over there.”

I pointed to the water flowing down the drain. The water running in this water way flowed back into the Irine river.

“Honestly, if we just hang a big rock on your legs and throw you in there, no one would ever find you until the end of time.”

When I told him that it was an easy thing to just kill him with a smile, his expression became quite a sight.

“But I’m not going to do that. It’s rather inhumane, isn’t it?”

Then I softly whispered, my hand not leaving his shoulder.

“So. If you put your hands on our business again, it’ll be the guards that will come visit you, not the Rotary Gang. Even if the guards didn’t make a move, that wouldn’t change anything. It’ll be enough if our big sis came over, right? You saw it earlier, didn’t you? I’m 100% sure that she’ll be able to beat you all to a pulp, whether it’s 10 or 100 people coming at her. But don’t feel too disappointed. If we have the chance later, we might be able to talk about something more constructive. We started on a bad foot, but why can’t we use this opportunity to turn this into a beneficial relationship? Huh?”

He ignored me at first because I was a young boy, but now he seemed to pay attention to what I had to say.

After I threatened him with murder and the destruction of his organization, he instantly nodded at my words with a bizarre expression decorating his face.

He might have thought that I bluffed about the guards, but he just witnessed Loyar’s overwhelming fighting skills.

“O… Okay…”

I got up from my crouching position and patted him on the shoulder.

Loyar and Daibun looked at me, seeming like they heard my rambling.

“Let them go. He probably learned his lesson.”

At my commanding words, Loyar and Daibun just blankly nodded their heads.

* * *

After solving this commotion, we returned to the bonfire, when a dumbfounded Loyar suddenly asked me something.

“Your Highness, do they teach you eloquence at Temple?”

“Huh? Not really.”

Loyar, who just saw me bewitch someone with words alone, seemed to doubt my words. I wonder if I was just some run of the mill bully in the past.

“Sometimes I feel like you are a completely different person.”

“Well, I might as well be. I don’t even know what the old me was like.”

Loyar smiled bitterly at my calm response. So what if I became like a different person? I was still an Arcdemon, after all.

“By the way, you do understand, right? If you were able to move the guards, wouldn’t it be better to do so? It’s not like there’s no possibility of them retaliating.”

Loyar was right. There was a good chance that they might come again to seek revenge or something else entirely.

“If they really were that stupid, that would be rather scary. Tell me if you see any signs of them making a move.”

There might be some people who just didn’t understand simple words. I thought that guy would not try to hit me after I told him the facts, but he actually went for it. This was a good learning opportunity. I was able to realize that there might be some people among the powerful who just wouldn’t be able to think calmly. Well, I didn’t actually get hit, but ripped that guy a new one instead though.

However, if they were able to understand what I tried to convey to them, there wouldn't be a need to call the guards on them. There was some reason for taking this risk.

"I don't know what might happen in the future, but they might become part of a bigger picture later on. That's why I left them be. How should I describe them? They are just a sketch for now, so to speak."

"What's that bigger picture you're talking about?"

I grinned at Loyar's question. The bonfire came into our view.

"I haven't made a decision on that yet, but I might have to absorb all the dark forces of the Imperial Capital in the future."

I haven't made a decision yet, but I might have to do it one day.

I wouldn't be on the level of the Thieves' Guild master. But If I do it, I would have to show Bertus a performance that would make him fall off of his chair.

"N, no… Your Highness, aren't your dreams a little strange?"

Loyar seemed to be shaken by my declaration to become the King of the humans' dark side, while being the Demon Prince. He said he wanted to be the King of the Capital's underworld, when he should dream of becoming a great Demon King.

"Who was it again who created an organization instead of doing actual spy work?"

"Ah…"

Loyar's face turned red, as she reflected on herself.

She didn't have any right to say that to me since she didn't even practiced what she preached herself.

* * *

We were away for a while, so Eleris and Sarkegaar were waiting in front of the bonfire. The two didn't need to come out. Eleris probably thought that Loyar would protect me no matter what.

Loyar explained to the two what just had happened.

“Your Highneeess! A decisive and confident move! I can’t help but admire your conviction, Your Highneeeeess!”

I somewhat expected Sarkegaar’s reaction.

“……Your Highness. Aren’t you enjoying violence a bit too much? Still… I think you did a good job, letting them go… I think you need to learn how to be more respectful.”

Naturally, Eleris’ reaction was also within my expectations. Eleris sighed and shook her head again as if she didn’t know what to do with me.

“Besides that, he said that he let them go because he wants to take over the dark side of the Empire.”

At that, both Eleris and Sarkegaar looked somewhat sullen.

“No, I didn’t say I’m going to do it, it’s just a possibility. I haven’t decided on anything yet.”

If there was a need for me to do it later, or when I feel myself mentally ready to do it, I would continue the conversation with Bertus, but for now nothing had been set in stone yet.

Still, just thinking about these things was rather strange, no matter if I wanted to go through with it or not. Anyway, I didn’t plan on doing anything like that for now.

For now, we sorted out the gangsters of the Al Ligar District, but the other districts were still crawling with them, so this matter wasn’t over yet.

“For now, catching those acting individually would be difficult. Inform me about those acting systematically. Try to figure out how big their organizations are. After that’s figured out we’ll take action, no matter if it’s me or Loyar coming forward.”

It sure would have been nice if this could be resolved peacefully and not through a power struggle between organizations.

“We can’t be active on every train line anyway. Don’t try to fight with newcomers,

instead try to negotiate for a territory. That would be a good way to see if they are able to understand normal words or not."

"Yes, Your Highness."

We couldn't cover every place anyway. It might just be better to communicate and pass on our own knowledge to the newcomers so that we can do our business in a symbiotic way. However, we should never give up on the best routes.

It sure was funny.

Forcibly creating rights that we didn't even have and negotiate on territories we just claimed as our own without actually owning them. I feel somewhat weird doing those bizarre gangster-like things.

I sometimes feel like I was actually managing an illegal organization.

"Let's stop talking about that for now. Do you have anything else to report?"

I looked at Eleris. Eleris somewhat made it apparent that she wanted to tell me something yesterday. It seemed like it was about human wickedness.

She didn't tell me anything, only that I would find out today.

At my words, all of their faces seemed to change.

But all their expressions seemed to convey different emotions.

Sarkegaar's showed hatred.

Loyar's showed anger.

And as for Eleris, I could feel sadness emanating from her expression.

It was Sarkegaar who opened his mouth first.

"There is talk about the demons who have been taken as prisoners of war getting sold on the Empire's black market."

"……What did you say?"

It was something completely unexpected.

CHAPTER 63

A quest appeared as if it was natural.

[Quest – Rescue the Demon Prisoners]

[Description: During the Victory Festival, Demon prisoners are to be sold on the black market somewhere in the Capital. As the Prince of the Demons, decide whether you want to rescue them or not.]

[Reward: 50 Achievement Points per rescued prisoner]

However, to my surprise that quest was pretty good.

The source of that information was Sarkegaar, not Loyar. Everyone couldn't hide their sadness.

"It seems like there are auction tickets secretly traded among the nobility. Of course, the prisoners will arrive here through the Warpgate in time for the Victory Festival, so the auction hasn't started yet…"

I didn't quite understand why people would want to buy demon slaves, but it seemed like Sarkegaar caught some rumors about the black market auction tickets passed around among the wealthy.

"Why would they sell demon prisoners on the black market? What are they going to use them for?"

Loyar answered my questions…

"……It could be out of a desire to collect… Aren't those usually the reasons for people buying things in auctions?"

"What do you mean, usually…"

They would buy demons like Goblins and Orcs because they want to have them in their collection? Saying that these were usually the reasons…

“No way.”

It was then that I realized why they were making these faces. Eleris nodded at my absentmindedly spoken words.

“The demons with the highest price are, of course, succubi.”

The most sought after item was, of course, a succubus, and the reason why was really obvious. It was then that I understood why Eleris was talking to me about the wickedness of humans yesterday.

“Damn it, I’m not quite sure, but succubi… wouldn’t that be quite dangerous?”

If my common knowledge was correct, weren’t succubi the ones that stole a human’s life force through their desires? But they want to buy a succubus exactly for that purpose? Did they want to die?

“Succubi obviously take away life force, but there must be a way to indoctrinate them to prevent them from doing that or even surgical procedures, perhaps.”

They were able to eliminate the aspect that made a succubus dangerous and turn them into slaves. So, they would sell completely harmless succubi, with their only means of defense removed.

“The prisoners may not have arrived yet, but we estimated there to be a huge number of them. There aren’t only succubi, but incubi and many other races that would make hot commodities for others as well.”

I nodded with a firm expression on my face at Sarkegaar’s words.

Dyrus thought that most of the captured demons would be killed and so did I. But there was no end to human greed. They were literally trying to sell humanoid demons that were almost indistinguishable from humans like that.

They were only of a different race, and yet they got sold on a slave market.

In the original, I wrote that there weren’t things like demon zoos. Considering this, that meant there might have been people who raised monster-type demons in some dark place I had no idea about. These things never reached the surface world at least.

And it was clear that the ones who got sold would be used for sexual purposes.

Loyar, Sarkegaar and Eleris all wore different expressions, but they all held similar emotions.

“So, do you want to rescue them?”

As I asked them that, all three had sombre expressions on their faces.

Sarkegaar shook his head.

“It’s excruciating to watch those human bastards’ behavior, my lord. But I know the weight of our situation. It’s saddening, but if we go out to save them and we fail, not only will their anger fall onto us, Your Highness would also be at risk.”

“……I think the same. Of course, they might not harm Your Highness, but we are the only three demons who can support you. If we lose even one of us, we’d suffer a lot more by having a weakend foundation.”

Loyar didn’t want to admit that what Sarkegaar said was right, but she had no other choice but to agree.

“……I agree.”

Eleris also nodded her head while slightly biting her lip.

All three of them wanted to save the captured demons, but they had a much more important goal than that. My safety.

If it weren’t for me they would have jumped in to rescue the demons like moths flying into open flames, as the Demon Realm had collapsed anyway, and they just couldn’t stand seeing the humans’ shameless behavior.

They were three demons that didn’t even appear in the original.

That said, if I wasn’t around they would have lived in a place completely unrelated to the main story. If I hadn’t interfered, they would have lived their lives in places that had nearly no connection to the main plotline. Of course, there was also the possibility that they ended up dead somewhere along the line.

I didn't know everything about this world. I knew the rough framework, but I had no idea about the details. I didn't describe passerby 1's life story, but that didn't mean he didn't have one.

They probably would have somehow entered the black market where the prisoners were being auctioned off and tried to rescue them.

The plot of the original was just in it's very early stages. If these three demons actually infiltrated the black market held in a secret place in the Imperial Capital, were caught and ultimately killed while engaging with the humans to retake their comrades, the main character and his party wouldn't have necessarily known about these happenings. The beginning parts of the novel only dealt with the main character's daily life at Temple, which had absolutely nothing to do with events happening outside of Temple.

The most that could happen right now was Delphine Izadra getting kidnapped while Ludwig was out playing with his friends and Ludwig somehow ending up rescuing her. Although it was said that the safety of the Temple students was the guards' highest priority, this was just too harmless an incident… I believed that the probability of such an incident happening was quite high. I didn't interfere much with Ludwig and his party, and Charlotte, B Class' anomaly, was at the Imperial Palace.

Ludwig would have to run around to find his kidnapped classmate, while I had to find a way to save my people who had been taken prisoner.

No matter how I looked at it, I felt like I was getting caught up in a more protagonistic plot line.

The only problem was that this incident felt far from something out of a slice-of-life novel. Well, a kidnapping case couldn't be called the epitome of that genre either.

I was just a high school student, you know?

Anyway.

Without me, those three would have tried rescuing the demons, and they probably would have failed. If they were successful, there would have been a huge commotion within the Imperial Capital about the demon captives having escaped.

Now, I was their highest priority, so they were probably only carrying their resentment in their hearts, being unable to even try.

How should I go about this?

To be honest, I wasn't even an actual demon, so I didn't really know why I had to do this. I had no intentions of actually rebuilding the Demon Realm. However, I didn't believe that only humans could be counted as "human". Those three in front of me weren't humans, but in my opinion, they were no different from humans. And in the end, they were bound to be much more important to me than others simply because they were absolutely on my side.

Demons possessing intelligence, who were essentially my people, would be sold into slavery in the Capital and would end up leading miserable lives.

Regardless of those various concerns, it was true that I would like to do something if I were able to. If I rescued them, they would also be absolutely on my side.

However, the risks were just too great. If these three got arrested or their identities were revealed, there would be a high probability that they would all die.

I sincerely wanted to save them, but it was also true that I was hesitant about risking my life for them. Because I knew best that I wasn't that great of a person after all.

That was why this uncle who was able to return back to high school was nothing more than a common delinquent who had a bit more guts than others, but overall just ended up being a rude brat.

Just thinking about infiltrating that black market, where numerous millionaires and nobles were sure to be gathered, to rescue those prisoners, I couldn't even imagine a way to get out of there unscathed. Security would be tight, and we might not even be able to enter in the first place.

Even those three, who were much stronger than me, would have failed.

Everyone had gloomy expressions on their faces as they had to accept that they couldn't do anything. Because protecting me was their highest priority. They didn't want me to make a decision on this, they were merely reporting to me what happened in the Capital.

“Still can’t we think about it a little more? Whether we should rescue them or not.”

No matter what I thought, I only had those three who absolutely trusted and followed me. And now those exact three wanted to do something so desperately, I couldn’t just tell them not to do it outright.

At my words, I could feel a rush of emotions rise in everyone’s eyes.

“No, Your Highness. The safety of the supreme ruler should be our absolute priority. It certainly is heartbreaking and excruciating, but the weight of it is completely different.”

Sarkegaar was still against it, regardless of his emotions. He was someone who put my safety and the future first, so it made perfect sense that he would say something like that.

“It’s okay. I haven’t decided yet whether we should do it or not, let’s just see if we have any good ideas.”

I didn’t even ask for Loyar’s or Eleris’ opinion and just said that we should talk about it at least. I certainly wouldn’t even consider trying if only risky ideas would come up. If it’s something that just can’t succeed, that would be suicide.

Eleris opened her mouth first.

“Assuming that you want to do something, there are three things you have to know beforehand. The location of the black market, the number of prisoners and their security.”

“That’s right.”

If we didn’t even know that, we would just poke at bare ground. First, we had to know where the black market would open. At Eleris’ words, Loyar nodded her head.

“Although we might be able to somehow find out, information related to the black market is high-level information that is spread secretly, even among nobility.”

That was right. There was no way that information about the black market, which was only supposed to reach the ears of nobility, would float around the streets so it was highly unlikely that the Rotary Gang could gather that kind of information.

“I think it would only be right for me to find out these things, as it was me who brought this information in the first place, but we need a ticket to enter the black market first.”

As it was a fairly covert market, one could only obtain information by getting a ticket. Sarkegaar could obtain information that only floated around the aristocratic circles. That was why he took on such risks to play the role of an imperial noble.

“How much is a ticket?”

“40 gold coins, as far as I know, Your Highness.”

The entrance fee alone was already 40 million won. If one were to just go there to take a look, that would be a great loss, so they would try to bid fiercely to get at least something out of it. It was a psychological trick to make people want to spend huge amounts of money to not have wasted that entrance fee.

“Of course, currently we don’t even know who exactly is selling the tickets, but I believe we can figure that out. Also, if you are fine with a bit of risk, we could steal the ticket from someone else and enter the auction in disguise. Of course, we first have to determine from whom we would take the ticket and what to do with that person after…”

It was possible to get a ticket, but the problem was the money, and if we enter using someone else’s ticket, there would be the problem of what we’d do with the person we stole the ticket from. No matter if we use deception magic or hypnotic magic, we’d still create a situation where a person who can’t remember ever attending the auction actually attended.

We still wouldn’t know where the black market was, and we didn’t know the number of prisoners either.

So, who were those great people who opened that black market anyway?

“What about those who opened the black market?”

That was my next question. At that, Eleris answered me.

“There’s nothing too difficult about that, Your Highness. It can be deduced that if a person was able to siphon off prisoners of war like this they’d have a close

relationship with the Allied Forces, because only then they'd be able to take away prisoners to sell on the black market."

"Right."

"If information about prisoners, who haven't even entered the city yet, getting sold on the black market is already spreading, that would mean that this plan had already been made long before the Demon World Conquest Army returned."

The prisoners hadn't even entered the city or had been siphoned off yet. However, there were already rumors about the black market opening, albeit not far spread yet. Among those who have such shady desires…

I nodded at Eleris words.

"That means that there had already been talk with the side managing the Empire's prisoners. The soldiers part of the unit managing the prisoners probably have something to do with some sort of organization, correct?"

"That's right. Even if not all soldiers at the commander level knew about this, any soldier with a rank capable of making decisions would surely know."

It would be impossible to siphon off prisoners of war without the permission of a commander or the leader of the prisoner management unit.

"Damn it, this is so high profile…"

I couldn't help but sigh. Although the Prisoner management unit may have some status different from the conquest forces, it was almost certain that someone close to the top was involved in this.

"There's a certain possibility that it might even be related to the Imperial Family."

"We can't rule out that possibility."

Loyar nodded her head at my words.

If left alone, they would be destined to be beheaded anyway. I couldn't deny that it was rather common to think of selling them on the black market and sweeping away the money of some rich deviants. Therefore, there was a certain chance that the

Imperial Family itself was already planning to sell some on the black market. It was obvious that a lot of money would flow into their pockets after all.

They might think that selling demons, who had their fangs pulled and weren't dangerous anymore, would be a much more viable business than just killing them.

This black market might be an underground event to commemorate this festival held by the Imperial Family. Taking away prisoners of war was certainly possible for someone of commander rank, but it was still quite risky.

So it was very unlikely that the Imperial Family was unaware of the matter of that black market. One could come to that conclusion simply by knowing that such rumors were floating about noble circles.

In fact, Bertus and Charlotte might already be aware of this.

"We aren't sure, but the people involved in this are just too high up."

It wasn't something so simple mere gangs could touch, including the Thieves' Guild. This was something planned by the Imperial Family, or a huge group with massive power.

If so, then we'd also be able to estimate the level of the security forces, the last thing we needed to know. I was sure it would have an incredibly high level of security.

"We would have to circumvent extremely tight security, rescue the demon prisoners of whom we don't know the number of, and then hide them somewhere…"

None of those three steps seemed feasible.

"Would that be possible with magic?"

In the end, I had to fall back on that cheat again. Eleris shook her head as I gazed at her.

"As it should be a place were a lot of important guest are expected to come to, they would have a lot of security measures. There probably will be wizards among the security personal."

"Would they be on the same level as you?"

Eleris seemed like a pretty high-level wizard to me.

“I’m not quite sure. All the forces of the Demon World Conquest Army, including the forces of the Empire, should have been seriously weakened, and there shouldn’t be too many elite forces left. But their wizards could be of similar level to me, and even if they aren’t mixed in with the security personal, I’m sure they don’t not expect that someone might want to interfere with the auction using magic. They might use an Anti-Magic Barrier. After all, they wouldn’t just be concerned about someone rescuing the prisoners. They might be more concerned about someone moving the auction to their favor using magic.”

There might be someone trying to use a large-scale hypnosis or hallucination spell or similar mental magic to make their bid go through. Magic was rather flexible, so it was quite ambiguous what one might try using it for. They should have installed some countermeasure against it at least. No matter if it was because of the prisoners or some other reason.

What would those three even have done in a situation like this? It might seem that they tried to do something in the original, but they might have just recklessly attacked the venue as they weren’t able to bear their anger anymore.

However, even after thinking about it, it was still really reckless. There were only the three of them and things wouldn’t really change much even if I was added into the mix.

Did those three really jump right into something that was logically impossible to achieve? Did they go through with their reckless attempt even though they knew they would most likely die?

If it was Sarkegaar, he would have immediately rushed in out of flaming rage, not having any hope of reconstructing the Demon Realm, and Loyar would have thought that something like that just shouldn’t happen. I didn’t know what would have happened in Eleris’ mind that she decided to go along with them in the end. Although it did seem that she felt a certain sense of guilt towards the Demons.

However, because of me, they didn’t decide to immediately jump into the fire.

It was almost impossible to infiltrate the auction house and rescue the prisoners, and even if we somehow managed to do it, where should we take them? Even if we

succeeded there'd only be problems, because we didn't even know how many prisoners there were.

However Eleris, who had been immersed in her thoughts for some time, tilted her head.

"Do we have to do it while the black market was opened?"

Huh? What did she mean?

"Wouldn't it be the worst time to rescue the prisoners while the black market was open, Your Highness?"

I then realized what Eleris was talking about.

The moment the auction started would be when the security would be the strongest. So, we were more or less talking about jumping in recklessly while it was the most dangerous for us.

"Wouldn't it be easier to start our operation before the auction started or after the sales were over and the demons got handed over to their buyers? There would still be some precautions taken before the sale, but after the ownership was transferred to another individual, they had to manage their slaves on their own, so I think it would be easier to get them at that moment."

"Ah… You're right."

Loyar nodded her head slowly as if she hadn't thought of that before.

CHAPTER 64

"The auction participants will definitely pay quite the high prices for them, so even if they might treat the slaves poorly, they probably won't kill them. So I thought it would be better to steal them like that, rather than break into the auction house or raid it."

"Sure enough… That seems to be more feasible."

After all the prisoners were sold, they would be placed under the control of the individual who bought them. Like that, it could be possible to rescue them one by one using Sarkegaar's transformative ability and Eleris' magic.

"As long as we know who bought which demon, we'd be able to rescue them, although it would take some time."

I was too focused on the black market and how to save them all in one go.

It feels a bit uncomfortable thinking about the unspeakable suffering the demons who have been sold would have to suffer through, but… Like that we'd be able to eventually rescue them. The only difficulty would be to note down who bought which demon in a presumably anonymous auction.

Eleris' method seemed very reasonable and less risky.

"We won't be able to rescue all of them that way, but it sure seems a lot safer."

Sarkegaar nodded.

"However, rumors about the enslaved demons having disappeared or having gotten stolen would start spreading. In that case, the others would significantly tighten their security or hide them away."

Sarkegaar's objection also had some reason to it. According to Eleris' words, we would be able to rescue some of them with certainty. However, there would be rumors circulating about the demon slaves disappearing or getting stolen among the ones who attended the auction, so they would obviously place them under much

stricter surveillance.

In the end, there was no way of saving all of them. Of course, we didn't have to necessarily rescue all of them.

"That's true, but I think that would be the only safe method we can choose at this point…"

I also thought that among all the ideas we had Eleris' method was our best option. It was pretty safe and the risk was low. Even though Sarkegaar's, Loyar's and Eleris' plan had their shortcomings, they seemed to think this was their best shot at rescuing some prisoners as well.

However, my opinion was slightly different. Whatever the outcome, the disappearance of the demon slaves was a completely different matter than just some black market auction items disappearing.

If Eleris' method succeeded, that would lead them to think that a type of criminal organization stole the demon slaves, which would cause a huge uproar in the Empire. Just knowing that some demons were hiding inside the Imperial Capital was a huge security threat. That would lead to a huge amount of guards sifting through the city. News about that incident would probably reach Temple as well.

However, I never wrote anything about the students being blocked from going outside because some demons disappeared in the Capital and one could never know when and where they would reappear.

In other words, that method of rescuing the demon prisoners by stealing them would have little effect, judging by the future I know.

Eleris would have come up with that method even without me around. Sarkegaar's and Loyar's reactions seemed like they couldn't think of any other method, so they obviously would have gone with that if they took action at all.

That meant that Eleris' method failed or they got caught soon after they succeeded.

The trading of prisoners of war on the black market would have happened whether I was there or not.

Their rescue attempt would have happened no matter if I was present as well.

Therefore, there was a high chance that Eleris' method would not yield any great results or would completely fail.

I knew these three facts.

I didn't know how that empty causality was filled, I only knew the end result.

In the end, every method those three could come up with or perform would fail. Unless my presence inspired them to think of a new method.

The only variable in all this was my presence.

I could only come up with an answer on my own.

I thought about using A Writer's Advice, but I didn't really want to use it because if I followed it I might end up in an even worse situation.

"Do you have any other ideas?"

"Hmm… I'm thinking."

Eleris posed that question. She must have noticed that I wasn't much of a fan of that method because I was just listening without giving any input.

Eleris' solution wasn't something I could have imagined. I could only think of the obvious, namely raiding or infiltrating the black market. Hence Eleris came up with the idea to carry out the rescue operation after the auction was over, and it also felt right to me.

No matter how much I thought about it, I really thought Eleris' method was the best, but I knew that it wouldn't end well.

It didn't matter why it failed. It was only right not to go down a path that would only lead to failure anyway. Of course, knowing why it failed would enable me to make some changes to it, but let's try to come up with some other methods first.

First, I needed to check how far our reach would be.

"Eleris, can you use the mass teleportation spell?"

That was a large-scale transportation spell which I once used to leave the Darklands together with Charlotte.

“I can use it, but it takes some time to cast.”

Seeing that Eleris was already at the level where she could use this spell that would make her a highly skilled magician. Even teleport was already considered a super high-level spell, and she could even use it on a large scale.

“How long?”

“About thirty minutes.”

“Do you have any Mass Teleportation Scrolls?”

“No, Your Highness.”

Thirty minutes.

That was pretty long.

Mass Teleportation scrolls were, of course, even rarer, so Eleris obviously didn’t have any. I once again felt how rare those two scrolls I used in the prologue were.

“It would be impossible for us to buy enough time to cast Mass Teleport on all of them after we reached the place where the prisoners are held. There probably are countermeasures against that inside the auction house.”

I nodded at Sarkegaar’s words. They probably were the most concerned about theft, especially using magic.

“Yeah, I guess so. But is it really that easy to prepare such extensive defense measures like that?”

“It’s not like that, Your Highness. In the case of Temple and the Imperial Castle, such security measures were always in operation, but it was actually quite difficult to temporarily put them up and maintain them.”

“So I would be right in my assumption that places with barriers or defensive measures of a level where they could suppress spatial movement magic or the use of

magic in general weren't a common sight?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

I found out another fact.

Anti-magic measures would be temporarily applied to the auction house itself.

The only places where such measures were permanently applied were the Imperial Castle and Temple. Of course, magic could be used inside of Temple, so they didn't use a barrier that would block every type of magic.

That said, it was rare to find a place that had magic-related or anti magic measures applied to them.

"So if the prisoners were kept somewhere else other than the auction house, you would be able to move them with a Mass Teleport spell, right? Even given the 30 minutes of casting time. So, how many people can you teleport at once?"

"Twenty is my limit. If it's at night, I might be able to do fifty though…"

Although she was able to withstand the sunlight, it seemed that she couldn't access her whole power during the day. Twenty people…

Just how many prisoners were there? It was so frustrating not knowing that. There should have been a huge number of them who got taken prisoner, but most of them would have already been executed.

I hated to say this, but the demons that would get sold on the black market were usually individuals that had some commercial value to them.

Succubi, incubi, and other humanoid demons I didn't know the race name of. I didn't think it would be such a huge number. I saw the prisoner procession when I escaped from the Demon King's Castle.

Most of them were monsters.

Loyar looked at me.

"Are you thinking of a different way?"

“I know it might be a stupid idea, but I think the best time to do our operation is when the black market opens…”

Stealing them would fail or have very little effect. I didn’t have any eloquent method to convince those three why I thought like that.

We couldn’t use Mass Teleport inside the auction house where the prisoners were held. We somehow had to get them out of there so that we could teleport them away.

Twenty by day and fifty by night.

If we could get them out to teleport them, we wouldn’t need to teleport in the first place. With such a huge guard force we would have to teleport them away as soon as we could.

It was simply impossible for us with our current power.

We wouldn’t be able to do it.

……That’s right.

“Isn’t the black market in itself illegal?”

It wasn’t just a normal market, it was a black market, so it was a secret auction. Secret transactions between bastards backed by wealth and authority. It was completely different from the normal underworld.

Eleris answered my question.

“Thinking about whether this was legal or illegal would lead nowhere, because I doubt there are any concret laws relating to this situation. The sale of demon slaves isn’t a common thing after all.”

Selling Demons was neither illegal nor legal. Loyar added.

“However, it’s clear that the Imperial nobles who decided to buy or sell demons, who had been declared as enemies to be killed, would be heavily frowned upon, Your Highness.”

“There might not be any problems legally, but there were some moral problems with

this, so there was enough room to criticize them."

That's why the trade of demon prisoners wasn't happening in a public place.

Raiding the auction house was impossible for us. If we couldn't do it, how about we made someone else do it for us.

"What if rumors were to come out that a black market would open for trafficking prisoners of war in the private sector?"

At my words, the expressions of those three changed. They seemed to ask me why I would do something like that.

"Wouldn't enslaving and trading demons who were supposed to be destroyed undermine the prestige of the Empire and be worthy of the citizen's wrath?"

It was rather self-evident that the citizens would be extremely angry if they knew that what the upper-class was doing wasn't in line with the justice they preached about.

"You mean the citizens would be so angry that they might even go so far as to raid the black market?"

"If they were to find out where the black market was located, there would certainly be one hell of a commotion at least."

Those who would attend the auction were by no means great men in fancy positions, even though they might be of higher standing. If citizens were to flood the black market and start hitting them, they would hurry and try to escape.

Even though that wasn't a place the general public should know about, like this they would end up finding out about it. If they were trying to use the Imperial Family's authority as their shield to control the citizen's riot, they would be admitting that the government was supporting the sale of demon prisoners for money.

"But if the citizens were to do that, wouldn't that mean that the Empire's forces would come out to suppress them? They might even just disguise themselves as military forces, so that they can use violent methods to do something about the citizens."

At Eleris' words, I nodded. If one found a clue, one's thoughts would unravel like a thread.

I found a different solution from Eleris' for this complicated puzzle.

"It's true that the Empire's power is piercing the sky. However, trade of the prisoners of war wouldn't only enrage the citizens, but would also go against the intentions of a certain powerful force. So I'm guessing that's why they decided to sell them on a black market."

"Who's that powerful force…?"

I smiled and gave my answer.

"Religious forces."

They dispatched religious forces for the pure purpose of destroying evil. They were a very important pillar of the Allied Forces.

At the moment, the forces that participated in the Demon World War of all churches were currently gathering here. And even after the Demon World War they would remain the most powerful group of Paladins and Priests regardless of their beliefs.

They were called the Knights Templar.

"The trade of demons in itself was already a great insult to the Knights Templar. So, there would be a huge backlash from all the religious factions from all over the continent."

The citizens weren't my main target. And since the Knights Templar were a religious group they wielded a separate power that wasn't under the control of the Empire.

If those rumors were to spread, the Knights Templar themselves would come to destroy that black market.

CHAPTER 65

The Knights Templar were religious armed forces not under the control of the Empire. Therefore, the reason for their actions had nothing to do with the national interest of the Empire and was only based on their religious beliefs.

The fact that we were dealing with demons that were supposed to get completely destroyed would cause a huge conflict between those two groups. And the citizens would be on the same side as the Knights Templar.

“If the Knights Templar started to interfere, there would be a huge commotion, and eventually, the black market, the forces behind it and the auction’s participants would have no means to object against them. In the end, they would have no choice but to hand the prisoners over to the Knights Templar.”

The Empire would have to take a step back. They wouldn’t oppose the Knights Templar just to make some money by selling demons.

There was no justification for the Empire to intervene with the Knights Templar, so it would naturally result in that, no matter what actual power they wielded.

It wasn’t enough for them to just capture and kill them, no, they had to go ahead and actually sell the demons secretly. For the Knights Templar, who considered the Demon World War a sacred war, the actions of the Empire were already seen as an enormous betrayal. Religion was, of course, spreading throughout the Empire and its Principalities. Religion was, after all, a power that controlled people’s minds. Antagonizing them was an option the Empire would never choose.

Eventually, they would admit to their mistake or cut off their tail. Then the prisoners of war would be taken by the Knights Templar.

In other words, my proposal was to destroy the whole black market in and of itself. Not using our own power, but somebody else’s.

Eleris nodded at my words.

“Your Highness, that will certainly deter the selling of demon prisoners on the black

market. However, if we do it like that… All the prisoners would get executed without exception."

"That's right."

This operation would just make the demons change hands from those who want to enslave them to the ones who want to kill them.

"And yet you're trying to get the Knights Templar to come, who'd block any way for us to take the prisoners away?"

I slowly began to explain my plan. In the end, this was just another type of gambling.

"Obviously, the Knights Templar would take the prisoners, and they will surely be used as a tool for coercion. However, they would never expect someone trying to mass teleport the prisoners away. I'm sure they'd be very angry. Of course, they may come in and slaughter the prisoners held in the auction house on the spot. However, as long as the prisoners are alive, they themselves were the living proof of the Empire's betrayal. They won't try to deal with them right away. They would use them as evidence to force an apology out of the Imperial Family."

Even if they would eventually kill them, they wouldn't want to deal with the prisoners immediately. At the very least, they will keep them alive for a few days, while they had some talks with the Empire. Although it might be more like a type of crusade than a regular chat though.

"Of course, you might be concerned that the market organizers decide to change their location after they heard rumors about the Knights Templar planning on raiding the place. Actually, that would be even better. The substitute venue would probably just be a hurriedly built place. They wouldn't have had time to apply anti magic measures. The substitute venue would most definitely get announced to the auction participants. So, we really need a ticket."

There would be a high possibility that they wouldn't be able to prepare countermeasures against magic as they had to change venues as fast as possible. In that case, it would be easier to infiltrate the auction and Eleris would be able to use Mass Teleport to get everyone out.

"If the Knights Templar take the prisoners, they will insist on holding on to them themselves, not the Empire. It wouldn't be any different in that case. We would have

to infiltrate their place."

In the end, it was Eleris who had to use the Mass Teleport Spell.

"Or, well, there's another method. After figuring out the prisoner transport routes, Eleris could use her Mass Teleport Spell in a place we have surveyed before. So when the prisoner's convoy passes by, we could teleport them away and then run."

We could prepare the spell at a fixed place where the prisoners are supposed to pass by and wait, then intercept the convoy by teleporting the prisoners away. In the end, it all depended on Eleris' Mass Teleport Spell.

There was a precondition to all this. Namely that the Knights Templar will take over the prisoners, but I believed that there was quite the high chance of that happening.

"Regarding the second option, it would be rather difficult to infiltrate the Knights Templar's headquarters. Other than possessing anti-magic barriers, they probably would realize that I'm an undead right after I set foot in their building."

"As I thought."

"The third option seems more feasible at the moment."

The black market changing venue would be beyond our control, so we could only react as things were happening.

For now, it would be best to find out the location of the black market, predict the route which the Knights Templar would take to escort the prisoners away and wait for Eleris to finish casting the spell while on the move.

"But in the end, we would only be able to rescue 20 people. The rest of the prisoners would die…"

If there were less than 20 demons getting auctioned off at the black market, we'd be able to rescue all of them, but if there were more, we'd end up leaving the rest to die. Loyar, who had been silent up until now, opened her mouth.

"Your Highness, how about we use Warp Gates instead of Mass Teleport?"

"Warp Gates?"

“Yes, it would seem that we’d just have to somehow make the Knights Templar lose control of the prisoners for a bit after they took them from the black market. Like that we could save everyone by using Warp Gates, not just a few by using Mass Teleport.”

“But wouldn’t that only be possible if there was a Warp Gate in the transportation route of the Knights Templar?”

It wasn’t like I didn’t think of that either. However, Warp Gates were only located in fixed places, so, as we didn’t know the black market’s accurate location at this stage, we wouldn’t be able to come up with a detailed strategy.

“There are a great many Warp Gates in the Capital, Your Highness.”

Since Loyar was running an intelligence organization, she couldn’t help but know a lot more about the Capital than the three of us.

“Even in front of the Knights Templar headquarters, one of the major facilities of the Capital, was a Warp Gate.”

No matter which way they went, they’d eventually pass one of these fixed places with the convoy. There’d inevitably be some Warp Gate on their route.

“Yes, I see, that’s plausible.”

If we used a Warp Gate, we could save as many prisoners as we needed.

“So when the convoy arrives before the Knights Templar headquarters we’d just have to make a commotion and make the prisoners somehow run over to the Warp Gates. We wouldn’t have to worry about them chasing after us through the gate. Eleris could just destroy the gate after we went through it.”

“…Good.”

Eleris nodded while seeming slightly nervous.

Warp Gates were two-way. If one of the gates were broken one couldn’t warp to either of those places anymore.

“Okay. But we need to make a very thorough plan well in advance. Not everything

would go as we think. First, we need to make sure the Knights Templar know exactly where the black market is so that they can find it. We can only hope that they don't immediately slaughter all the prisoners. We also would have to neutralize the troops stationed at the Warp Gates. We should also think of a way to distract the Knights Templar long enough for the prisoners to escape."

"I'll take care of the disturbance."

It seemed like Loyar would take on that role.

"Will you be fine? You could die."

"I won't have to fight against them, I just have to cause a disturbance. I might get hurt, but I don't think I'll die."

"I'll also help cause a disturbance with my magic."

It wasn't just Loyar, Eleris would support her with her magic.

"I will disguise myself as a soldier stationed by the Gate."

In a way, Sarkegaar played the most important role. Completely taking over the Warp Gate.

After sending the prisoners away through the Warp Gate, Loyar, Eleris and Sarkegaar would all jump into the gate and proceed to destroy the other gate to prevent pursuers to come after them. To return they could just use the Mass Teleport Spell.

If we were able to pull that off, it would be perfect. However, since there were so many prerequisites, we couldn't know if some variable would occur to mess everything up.

I didn't really have a part in this, but I'd keep an eye on the situation and how everything was unfolding.

Getting ready to use 'Revise' in the event of a crisis.

* * *

The three of them, except for me, tried not to do anything dangerous because of me,

but, in the end, they would carry out that operation to rescue the demons under my instructions.

It would cause a great commotion in the Capital. This was never a secret and safe task. Even if they succeeded, the Empire would be on high alert for some time after. I mean, there would be powerful high ranking demons having a fight with a someone in the middle of the Capital after all.

Even if things went as planned, we would have to live in danger for a while, but if things didn't go as planned, one of the three of them had to be sacrificed. Everyone agreed.

If any of the three were to get caught or it failed, they had to expect to die, and if my identity was in danger of being discovered they told me to use Sarkegaar's ring to escape.

I didn't know if the captured demons were even worth this much or not.

However, those three just couldn't bear seeing the prisoners, who were from the same country as them, live such miserable lives without even being able to die properly. So those three risked their lives for them. Even if I wasn't directly risking my life, as the prince of that ruined country, I was trying my hardest for them.

It was something I shouldn't even have considered.

However, just by deciding that we should rescue them and giving them detailed instructions, it seemed like Loyar, Eleris and Sarkegaar had already gained unbreakable trust in me.

I had no idea if it was just because they were demons or because they were directly in the service of the country that they respected me as their monarch.

They already acknowledged my absoluteness only because I was an Arcdemon, but from the moment I decided to rescue the prisoners they seemed to give me even more respect than before.

"Your Highness, thank you."

So that night, while I was lying in bed, Eleris thanked me over and over.

“It’s you guys who’ll do most of the work, so why are you thanking me?”

That was the truth. All I had to do was to use the Revise function to stop certain events from happening and realize events that shouldn’t have happened in case of danger.

“I’m thanking you for allowing us to do something as dangerous as that.”

In the end, even if I wouldn’t actually do much, I still allowed them to take action.

Perhaps compassion wasn’t something that belonged to the qualities of a king. If one viewed it as such, Eleris seemed to appreciate what I tried to do for them. If I cold-heartedly told them to just leave the prisoners alone, they would have understood, but they would have also been very sad about this.

The funny thing was, seeing me allowing them to take such reckless actions and even coming up with a plan for them, seemed to have impressed even Sarkegaar who had a completely different stance from Eleris. Perhaps Sarkegaar viewed my actions as part of my attitude as a monarch who cherished all the demons of the Demon Realm.

I still didn’t know what stance Loyar had, but, in the end, she also desired to save the other demons. And there I was, coming up with a detailed plan, so it seemed like she was also impressed by that.

“Anyway, are you really okay with this? No matter what we do, someone might get hurt.”

Eleris didn’t like violence. However, she had no other choice but to use her magic to distract the Knights Templar. Just as those three were risking their lives to make this plan successful, of course, there was also the possibility that someone, whether they or the Knights Templar, would die or get injured.

She might hesitate or make a mistake. That was my concern.

“……I have taken away the lives of so many people already.”

Eleris seemed dazed, her eyes closed. She looked endlessly sad.

“I’m so used to it, that I’m sick and tired of it.”

It wasn't that she couldn't do it, she did it too often and much too well.

I couldn't say anything to this sad Eleris, who told me that I had no need to worry.

* * *

The Festival started on Monday and Sarkegaar would also get the tickets for the auction then. That way we could pinpoint the location of the black market. They cost a huge amount, 40 gold coins, but it wasn't an impossible amount for us. I mean, we didn't even use the money we prepared for Temple's entrance fee yet. In addition to that, as Sarkegaar lived the life of a noble, he should have kept some emergency funds so that it wouldn't be completely impossible for him to maintain his lifestyle without the organization.

That long Festival, which started on Monday, would run for an entire month.

Monday.

We were facing the streets of the Imperial Capital, already buzzing with a festive atmosphere.

-Waaaaaaah!

-Long live the Allied Forces!

-Hurray for Atorius!

-Hurraaaaaaaay!

People cheered as the soldiers arrived from the large Warp Gate located in the Temtoan District, north of the Al Ligar District. An endless procession of soldiers kept on coming out of the Gate.

A steady stream of them left the blue Portal and were marching towards the Imperial Castle.

If we were to use the map of Seoul, then they started in the Jung District and went on to the Jongno District and people stood close to them cheering the endless parade of soldiers.

The Knights and Cavalry on horseback arrived first, followed by the Infantry and other soldiers. They were all cheered for equally.

Everyone sent endless cheers towards the Allied Forces, which achieved this miraculous victory in the Demon World War.

Ludwig must be watching this scene from somewhere. There was also a high chance that Delphine Izadra was getting kidnapped by someone while watching the festive people celebrating everywhere and eating good food.

If it didn't happen, well, that would be good then.

A huge number of soldiers were walking at the same pace. A huge number of countries and groups participated in this War as the Allied Forces.

They each carried a flag symbolizing their origin.

The procession of this triumphal army would go on for an incredibly long time. They would be able to enjoy the honor of entering the Imperial Palace accompanied by the cheers of the citizens, as well as being treated with utmost respect inside of it. Those who earned merit would receive their due rewards.

Among the cheers of this huge crowd, we chatted while keeping our distance from them.

"The prisoners of war might arrive through a different Gate than the Victory Procession."

"Maybe so."

We weren't just here to watch this spectacle. It was a sight that made me lose my appetite anyway.

The reason for me coming all the way here was to check whether the prisoners of war would be led through the same gate as the triumphal army. If they did, we could try taking them away at that moment.

Even if we didn't do that, we could at least ascertain the amount of prisoners that got transported here. However, no matter how long we kept on watching, there was no convoy or procession that seemed to contain the prisoners of war.

Since this was where the triumphal army passed through there might be a high chance that they would make the prisoners, who would cause people to frown, enter through a different Gate.

“Even if we succeeded, the only ones we’d be able to safe were the ones getting taken to the black market, right?”

“That’s right.”

The only ones we could save were the demons who had a certain market value and got sent to that black market.

CHAPTER 66

The other prisoners who wouldn't be put on the black market would probably be managed by the Empire, and no form of trickery could help us rescue them. I wasn't sure if the Empire would kill those prisoners or do something else with them. It was possible that they would conduct experiments on them for research purposes.

No matter what, we couldn't save them. It would be absurd to even try to save them. Even the operation we were going to carry out this time was extremely dangerous.

"Did you say it was on Thursday?"

"Yes."

Sarkegaar had already bought the tickets.

Today was Monday, and the black market would open starting Thursday. It would stay open for a total of four days, from Thursday to Sunday.

The question was, were all those prisoners put on the black market? If they planned on replenishing the prisoners every day, we could only save a quarter of the demons that were planned to get auctioned off.

"I think they will probably have all of them there, but…"

There probably were prisoners of war who'd enter the Imperial Castle to be detained. It would be far more efficient to siphon off the ones they want to sell from the beginning, than take them out of there every day. So the auction would be held for four days, but the black market would keep all the prisoners they were planning to sell in the auction house.

The best way they could go about this was to find out through which Gate the prisoners would get led and siphon them of immediately at that moment before detaining them in the auction house.

There were dozens of Warp Gates in the Capital alone. It was impossible to monitor all of them.

We didn't use the Rotary Gang to gather information for this operation. Only Loyar, Sarkegaar and Eleris would take action. Later, this incident might be seen as a terrorist incident caused by the demons, but if we used the Rotary Gang to gather information beforehand, that would just cause unnecessary suspicion.

"As we expected, they'll come from the Badelz Gate, won't they?"

"That's what I think."

The location of the black market was in the Badelz District, which was the Mapo District in my mind. It would open in the basement of the Merchant Guild's headquarters. In other words, the Merchant Guild had a solid relationship with the black market owners. That fact was a nice bonus.

When I learned the location of the black market, I wondered why I didn't think of that sooner. That was quite the obvious place for it to be.

The Merchant Guild must have big storage units for all the expensive goods they had to store, so it would be enough to temporarily accommodate the prisoners in these units equipped with enough security, safety and scale. Of course, it would be easier to proceed with the auction like that as well.

I didn't know how deep the Merchant Guild was involved in this. However, they would have had to agree to this drastic move of opening a black market in their headquarters. They probably judged that they wouldn't be able to stop this business, which was supposedly linked with many people with great authority. Of course, they might have been coerced, but we wouldn't be able to find out that much.

The venue was the Merchant Guild's headquarters. Even in my opinion, there wasn't a more suitable place to proceed with the black market auction. In addition, as many merchants were rather rich, they were likely to directly participate in the auction.

Even if there were rumors about a black market opening soon, the chances that they would change the venue were remarkably low. Even after I thought about it quite thoroughly, I couldn't come up with an auction venue that would be more optimized than the Merchant Guild's headquarters.

Since Sarkegaar was a noble, he wouldn't be able to come out of the Imperial Palace for a while because he had to attend the Victory Ceremony and Party.

He decided to only attend on Monday for now, and would find some excuses to join our side from Tuesday onwards.

The prisoners would most likely arrive through the Gate in the Badelz District, where Loyar was stationed.

However, I and Eleris were keeping watch on the side where the Victory Procession was continuing on endlessly, just in case.

* * *

Monday evening.

The vicinity around the Imperial Palace was rather crowded with people, and one could hear the sound of magic used as fireworks bursting from afar. It seemed like some wizards were putting on a fireworks display.

As alcohol and food were distributed free of charge, the streets were full of people drunk on alcohol and euphoria. There were many people who didn't even know each other before, sitting together at tables placed on the streets, talking while hugging and dancing.

Of course, the miraculous survival of Princess Charlotte de Gardias was also one of the hot topics. Although it's been some time now since the Princess returned, Artorius' bravery, The Allied Force's greatness and the miraculous survival of the Princess were still in everybody's mouths.

There were also talks about the Princess becoming a supernatural power user.

Charlotte was so preoccupied with finding Valier at the moment, that she didn't seem to concentrate much on improving her power though. In fact, Bertus said that Charlotte was on the verge of self-destructing, and I agreed to that to some extent.

-The Princess has to obviously become the Empress!

-Ooh! True that!

-After surviving through such hardships, she absolutely has to be blessed by God!

However, the public didn't hesitate to say that the Princess should become the

Empress, and there was no one refuting with that. The Public overwhelmingly supported the Princess.

A princess who was rescued dramatically after being kidnapped by the Demon King. She was also the sole survivor.

That was one hell of a story. Bertus didn't have anything he could beat that story with. Although he had the possibility of becoming a Sword Master that was still in the far off future. Also, becoming a Sword Master itself was great and all, but the Demon King was already dead. He had nothing to accomplish after becoming a Sword Master.

That story alone wouldn't make her Empress, but it was only natural that huge conflicts would arise if Charlotte, who was supported by the public, didn't ascend the throne.

In my personal opinion, the one who displayed superior abilities at the moment was Bertus. However, the public supported the Princess, and she wasn't that hugely inferior to the Prince. Therefore, Charlotte was still in a more favorable position in regards to the succession of the throne.

Now that the Victory Festival was taking place, it seemed obvious that the citizens of the Empire would like to see Charlotte become the next Empress.

Of course, regardless of that, at the end of the Victory Procession, we confirmed that no convoy with prisoners was among them, so we were about to go over to the Mapo District. At the confluence point, we were mixed up among a group of drunk passersby.

-It's free! Free, I say! Eat and drink to your heart's content!

There were quite a few stores that offered free food and alcohol to share the joys of victory separated from the Festival. For that purpose there were many tables placed before inns and restaurants.

The Demon Realm had been a long time enemy of the humans. The mere fact that they were now forever freed from the fear they spread was enough to make everyone euphoric even handing out free food.

If they had lived their whole life in the Imperial Capital, then they should have never

even seen a single hair of a demon for their entire lives, and now they wouldn't ever see one in the future as well. However, where did their fear and hatred against demons come from?

People were afraid of the unknown after all. In fact, the Demon Realm probably made plans to conquer the Human Realm as well.

We sat at an empty table. Loyar was wearing a robe, Eleris cast a bit of disguise magic on herself, while I didn't wear any disguise at all. I had already transformed into a completely different form not comparable to Reinhardt after all.

Loyar opened her mouth.

"I saw a lot of wagons covered in black sheets coming through the Badelz Gate."

"Did you check what was inside of them?"

Loyar shook her head in answer to my question. Our surroundings were very noisy, and Eleris cast some soundproofing magic so that no one would hear what we would be discussing now.

Since this had nothing to do with the Rotary Gang we decided to hold our meeting here.

"I didn't see them, but I could tell just by smell and sound alone. I'm sure it's them."

Loyar's sense of hearing and smell were particularly developed.

"…Aren't you actually a dog?"

"What?"

"No, I mean… You're… just very much like a dog."

I mean, she had a good sense of smell and hearing, she listened well to orders and when she slept she seemed no different from a wild dog as well. She was completely like a dog in human form. What was with this?

Even in your human for you were like a dog, huh?

Loyar seemed shocked by my words and Eleris covered her mouth and laughed.

“She’s not a dog. She’s just a very dog-like person.”

“Hey!”

At Eleris’ words, Loyar’s face turned red. Eleris also seemed to be having fun teasing Loyar.

“Well, I’ll trust what you said. You’re sure, right?”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

Although the convoy’s content was hidden, Loyar could tell by the sound and smell that the numerous wagons that came through Badelz Gate were filled with the demon prisoners.

Loyar continued to recount what she saw.

“I don’t know about the Victory Procession’s side, but all the wagons were under strict escort. People seemed to be interested in them, but no one seemed to know what was in them.”

Some might have contained things like spoils form the Demon Realm. They probably got transported through the same Gate. Some of the wagons also contained some of the prisoners.

“Most of the wagons seemed to be moving towards the Imperial Palace, but some were also heading towards the Merchant Guild’s headquarters.”

Loyar probably went up to a high place to watch the wagon procession. Some of the wagons that were supposed to go to the Imperial Palace actually went to the Merchant Guild’s headquarters.

“There were a total of 30 wagons. Judging by their sizes and the sounds and smells coming from them, I’d estimate there to be about 5 per wagon.”

“So about 150 people…”

Thanks to knowing the location of the black market in advance, it was rather easy to

infer which gate the prisoners would get escorted from. 30 wagons, so about 150 prisoners of war were to be sold on the black market.

“No, Your Highness, I estimate them to be half that amount.”

However, Loyar shook her head at my estimate.

“Why is the actual number smaller?”

“No, that’s not it, Your Highness. There were about a dozen wagons loaded with things other than prisoners.”

“What other things?”

“It seems that the prisoners of war aren’t the only merchandise sold on the black market.”

“Ah… Right. That might be the case.”

Other than the prisoners they took from the Demon Realm, they also loaded the wagons with loot they wanted to take to the Merchant Guild. Twenty wagons were filled with prisoners and the other ten with loot.

They would also sell the items they stole from the Demon King’s Castle on the black market, not only the prisoners.

“Hmm… I’m not sure about the prisoners, but if it’s stolen loot, there might be a possibility that this wasn’t approved by the Imperial Family… Or was that loot designated to be sold?”

The chances that the Imperial Family had nothing to do with this slightly increased. There might also be the possibility that the loot that was to be sold were things the Imperial Family had no interest in. After all, there was little chance that the Imperial Family didn’t know about this black market.

Most of the wagons with prisoners made their way to the Imperial Palace. There was nothing we could do about that.

However, about 100 prisoners would make their appearance on the Merchant Guild’s black market.

They could be rescued or slaughtered depending on how well we do.

“It’s fortunate that we were able to get some information in advance. Like that we were able to ascertain the amount of prisoners. How about security?”

“I have confirmed that it’s tighter than usual. There were more than 10 guards at every entrance of the Merchant Guild’s headquarters, and they were all disguised as mercenaries, but the atmosphere they gave off and their appearance were by no means ordinary.”

High-level armed forces disguised as guards were stationed at the Guild headquarters. I didn’t know if they were Knights or something, but leaving them unattended would be rather difficult.

Of course, there’d also be wizards inside.

“Okay… Now we have to somehow force the Knights Templar to raid that place…”

As slaves, they might be able to save their lives, but they’d stay demons no matter what.

I wasn’t sure if it was worth risking their lives to give them their freedom.

However, as the last leader of the Demon Realm, I made a decision. I had no intention of rebuilding the Demon Realm, but I had decided to rescue them.

Gradually I started to realize that a leader had to be a person that made a certain judgement before even discussing the rights and wrongs of that decision and perfectly carry out said judgment.

If all of them were slaughtered by the Knights Templar because of the failure of our operation, would I be able to withstand that? Hundreds of lives could be lost due to my negligence, could my mind handle that?

Some might want to sacrifice their freedom to keep their lives.

I could never know.

So, I decided to take it easy.

“I’ll have to think of a way to pass on this information to the Knights Templar without getting caught.”

I’ll definitely succeed.

My ability would make that belief reality.

My power couldn’t actually do that yet, but it helped me calm down at least.

CHAPTER 67

The Knights Templar also returned together with the triumphal army. Their Victory Event was different from the Allied Forces Victory Event under the control of the Emperor.

Although the Knights Templar were a huge pillar of the Allied Forces, it was originally an army of the Five Churches and if the Emperor were to praise them for their achievements, it would be the Emperor doing god's work.

Therefore, the Knights Templar would return to their headquarters and receive a congratulatory and blessed speech from the Popes of the Five Churches. All of them, as distinguished guests, had come to the Knights Templar's headquarters in person, coinciding with the Imperial Victory Ceremony.

The headquarters of the Five Churches were located in different places, and among them, only the Great Hall of the mighty Als was located in the Imperial Capital Gardium.

All the leaders of the Five Churches, the Church of the God of War Als, the God of the Sun Salaam, the God of the Moon Mensis, the God of Purity Towan and the God of Courage Litel, were in the Capital. After all of them finished congratulating and blessing the Knights Templar, they would join the Emperor to commemorate this Victory.

So, on the first day the Victory Ceremony is held separately for religious reasons, not because of any personal conflict.

Originally, the Knights Templar also just returned from such a long and hard war, so after commemorating their victory they would take a long rest. And the religious leaders would also be happy to exchange some words with the Emperor about their victory.

"Hmm…"

In that peaceful, friendly and festive atmosphere, I was about to cause a huge conflict between those two groups: The Knights Templar and the Imperial Family.

Trying to sell and use the demons as sex slaves was a huge religious heresy, regardless of whether it was legal or not. Even the wealthy and nobles of the Empire wanted to buy them. you know? It would be strange for the Knights Templar and the religious leaders to not get enraged.

There was no need to wait for the auction to start. As long as they knew that the prisoners were already in the Merchant Guild, there would be no problem at all for the Knights Templar to attack right no. I had no interest in arresting all the immoral Imperial nobles as they attended the auction.

We were still sitting at the table placed on this bustling street, chatting.

“There are two ways to go about this. Give the information directly to the Knights Templar or create rumors.”

Eleris and Loyar nodded their heads at my words.

To leak the information to the Knights Templar directly, or spread rumors among the public so that it will reach their ears. We had these two methods.

“In the former case, a certain reaction can be expected, but they might have doubts about the individual that transmitted the information per letter or something. If they just thought about it for a bit, the Knights Templar would probably be able to guess that the ones who leaked the information were demons.”

That was what Eleris said, and Loyar nodded to her words. It didn’t particularly matter if the informant was a demon or whatever because what we were doing was already dangerous as is, but it wasn’t hard to see that leaving traces was not a good choice.

“The method of spreading rumors to leak the information wouldn’t leave behind any suspicious traces, but, we can’t be sure that the Knights Templar will pick up these rumors and act on them.“

“That’s right.”

“Also, if the rumors start to spread further, there might be a chance that the black market’s organizers will take action before the Knights Templar. Those who’d be most sensitive about these kinds of rumors were them, so they might change the black market’s venue or cancel it all together.”

I also agreed to Loyar's opinion.

The latter option had the disadvantage of not knowing when the Knights Templar would take action. By the time the rumors reached their ears and they decided to take action, the auction might already be canceled.

"The former would have a definite effect, but it would leave a tail behind and the latter would make it difficult to predict the flow of events…"

Both methods had their advantages and disadvantages. If I used my Preview Function, I would be able to check what would happen in the future, but I couldn't use it right now.

[You are unable to make use of this function at the moment.]

When I tried using it, I only recevied this message.

Damn it, I had cheats, but I wasn't even able to use them however I wanted. They should have just kept silent about this useless function.

An uncertain but safe method and a certain but slightly more dangerous method.

"Let's go with the direct method. If the black market or the Imperial Family got wind of this, we might not even get to try saving them."

I judged that way, the chances would be lower for them to predict our moves.

"Understood…"

"We'll do that."

They both nodded, agreeing to my judgment.

* * *

Passing on information to the Knights Templar.

Just that wasn't that hard to do. I just had to send them an anonymous letter. On Tuesday, we met up with Sarkegaar after the Victory Event and sent a letter to the Knights Templar.

The black market located in the Merchant Guild's headquarters where the demon prisoners were said to be sold would open on Thursday.

We observed the Knights Templar's movements all Tuesday. Eleris and I were positioned in a place where we could easily overwatch the huge temple that was the Knights Templar's headquarters, and Sarkegaar and Loyar decided to keep an eye on the Merchant Guild, because there might be certain movements visible over there as well.

The Knights Templar were located at the Rosenak District, or the Yangcheon District in Seoul. If they wanted to head from the Mapo District to the Yangcheon District, they would have to cross the bridge first, as one had to do if one were to come from Gangbuk to Gangnam.

Eleris seemed particularly uncomfortable, because we were close to the headquarters of those who held a power most dangerous to her, divine power.

"They don't seem to make any special movements."

It had been over six hours now since I sent them the letter. I sent over a second worry-filled letter to not get ignored, so there was no way that it didn't reach them.

"There's a good chance that they are questioning the information presented in these two letters. They might be discussing that internally at the moment."

Sending armed forces to the Merchant Guild was something that had to be discussed, and it was understandable enough that they wouldn't immediately believe an anonymous letter sent by an unknown source, telling them to dispatch forces.

It seemed like they were still discussing at this stage.

Since we didn't know when they would make their move, Eleris and I kept on from one inconspicuous place to another. As there were many people on the streets it was easy to mix in with the masses.

The night was problematic though. One by one, the people would leave except a few drunkards.

When night fell and the streets were covered in darkness, Eleris and I hid in a discreet place at the side of an alley.

“Doesn’t look like they’ll make their move today…”

It was already very deep into the night. It was probably too late for them to take action today.

“I think we’d better go back.”

Even if I stayed here, there would be nothing I could do, and if the situation worsened I’d just put myself in unnecessary danger. Eleris’ words were true, but I couldn’t do as she said.

If I didn’t know how this situation would unfold when a crisis strikes, I wouldn’t even be able to ‘Revise’ it.

“No, my duty is to observe the situation.”

That’s what I softly mumbled, expressing my intentions of staying here, even if it was a little coercive towards Eleris.

“And the mana train won’t run at this hour, so getting back would be more troublesome.”

It was deep into the night, so it would be much more difficult to get back, whether to Temple or any other place. As if she knew what I meant, Eleris hid me and herself in the shadows.

Even while a grand festival was going on, night was still night.

The streets that were so busy by day, now only had some drunken husks of people passing by from now and then. But then-

-Stomp, stomp

From afar, sounds of heavy footsteps echoed through the street. Eleris poked her head out of the alley, then looked towards me and nodded.

Midnight.

That was when the Knights Templar began to move.

* * *

It was night so we couldn't mix in with the crowd. After casting Invisibility on me and herself, Eleris and I followed them for a while.

'They might be able to see through magic. Don't get too close.'

Eleris whispered to me as quietly as she could, and I nodded.

Those Paladins were obviously veterans. A total of nearly 200 Knights of the Knights Templar were marching in front of us fully armed. Each of the knights held great divine power, so if they were to get hurt, they could simply heal themselves and continue to fight. Since I was on the receiving end of Adriana's recovery spells once, I could tell how mighty divine power could be.

200 such monsters were marching through the streets.

They could be called elites.

200 weapon and divine power experts who engaged in battle after buffing themselves and could even heal any injury they might receive in battle.

Monsters that were more like zombies than actual zombies. A Paladin.

They were something that exceeded the Undead.

200 Elite Paladins who deserved to be called human tanks were now on their way to the Merchant Guild's headquarters. If they would engage in battle with the Merchant Guild's forces, that would create chaos.

'What about Sarkegaar and Loyar?'

'I sent a familiar over.'

Since there was no tool capable of establishing two-way communication, Eleris seemed to communicate with them using her familiars.

She passed on the information that the Knights Templar were on their way and would soon arrive to those two who were keeping an eye on the Merchant Guild's side.

Soon, they reached the bridge leading across the Irene River. We continued to follow behind them.

It was good that everything was going as planned up until now.

But why were they taking action at night…?

I had a bad feeling about that somehow.

'Why did they decide to move at night?'

'Wasn't it because they took so long to discuss this matter?'

'If it's like this… They must have judged that this was an urgent matter.'

It was good that they decided to take action at night. During night time, when Eleris' powers grow stronger, the success rate of our operation would increase even more.

Obviously, if the Knights Templar were dispatched during the day that would cause a big commotion. If there were many people up on the streets while such a fight were to occur in the Merchant Guild, the citizens would come to know its circumstances. They would find out that people tried to sell demons on a black market.

Naturally, that would lead to the prestige of the Empire to get tarnished.

Did they move out during night time out of some form of consideration to save the Empire's face? They planned on getting rid of this disturbance silently and quickly at night.

However, this case would seriously raise the Knights Templar's prestige. Wouldn't it be better for them to let the public know of this?

Though, considering the big picture, it couldn't be denied that the Knights Templar should take care of this incident quietly though…

Without questioning their actions further, I followed those 200+ Paladins marching forward.

'This, I'll give it back to you for now.'

'…… Yes.'

I didn't forget to return the Flame of Tuesday back to Eleris for a while.

* * *

Fortunately, this midnight march continued until they reached the Merchant Guild's headquarters. I was wondering if they were headed somewhere else, but so far everything was flowing as intended.

We were in a place from where we could observe the building from a distance. Eleris used floating magic while hugging me to get us on the roof of a building.

Loyar and Sarkegaar were hid in the place that they chose as an observation spot, reading the flow of the situation. Loyar looked at us and nodded seeming like she knew we were present even though we had invisibility magic cast on us. That showed that our location could be predicted by smell and sound.

Because we had Loyar, we didn't need to look at the scene with our own eyes…

However, there was one thing we could notice even if we didn't have ears as good as Loyar.

'They aren't very loud.'

The other two, including myself, nodded at Eleris' words. They were supposed to loudly shout something like: "You blasphemed the Gods!" but they didn't do something like that.

Loyar shook her head.

'Even though their voices are low, it seems like there's an argument going on in there.'

Loyar told us that, although they try to not make as little noise as possible, they were still arguing.

'We got information that a black market was supposed to open here and that demon prisoners were to be auctioned of there. In the name of God, I demand you cooperate and let us search this place. If these allegations are not true, the Knights Templar

shall promise to make a formal and respectful apology to the Merchant Guild.'

Loyar seemed to be able to hear their conversations from this distance.

'The guards don't seem to make it easy for them.'

However, even if the Knights Templar came to visit, the other party wouldn't just let them search the place so easily. That was to be expected. Loyar seemed to concentrate on the following conversation as she fully focused on her ears. The three of us remained silent and only looked at Loyar, trying not to get in her way.

I was wondering how the conversation would continue.

-Rooar!

We could clearly hear the sound of many people pulling out their weapons and going at each others. I didn't expect this battle to actually take place.

'The guards eventually made way.'

They didn't want to open the way, but when the Knights Templar drew their weapons, they had no other choice but to open their doors in the end.

They had no good reason to block the Knights Templar's way. They were disguised as Merchant Guild guards. If they started a conflict with them Knights Templar, they would have justification to call them blasphemers, giving the Empire a lot to explain. For example, why regular soldiers were disguised as Merchant Guild guards.

They probably thought everything would be over once they started a fight with the Knights Templar. Of course, the moment they opened the doors for them and released the prisoners, things would be over for them as well.

Anyway, the Knights Templar had entered, meaning I wouldn't have anything to do anymore from now on, although my job wasn't over yet.

There was still a possibility that the Knights Templar would immediately execute the prisoners on the spot without escorting them to their headquarters. That was what everyone was most worried about.

[The 'Revise' Function has been used.]

The function that would make things happen that wouldn't normally and would prevent things from happening that should.

The Knights Templar would escort the demon prisoners from the Merchant Guild to their headquarters without killing or harming them.

[The 'Revise' function cannot be used.]

……What?

My heart froze over when I saw that message appear in front of me.

If I couldn't even use the function it wouldn't even matter how many achievement points I had at my disposal.

Seeing that message made me stop for a moment. I knew that an event that was too improbable would require a huge amount of achievement points or wouldn't be able to be revised at all.

Was it something like that?

Did that mean that the Knights Templar didn't even consider anything else but killing all of them out of resentment for those guys trying to auction off demons?

'Hey, why are you like this?'

When Eleris noticed that I was acting a little strange, she asked worriedly.

'Ah, no… It's just… What if… Those guys decide to kill all the prisoners… '

They didn't make this a public appearance, but it wasn't a cover-up either. I tried to make sure that they would escort the prisoners back to their headquarters using the Revise function.

The prisoners that were supposed to be auctioned off could be used as evidence to force an apology out of the Empire. So, they could only use the living prisoners to put pressure on the Empire.

I sincerely thought that was the most probable situation, but it seemed like I was wrong, wasn't I? If so, I had made a huge mistake, as all the prisoners that could have

survived as slaves would now get collectively killed because of the choices I made.

My heart was completely frozen and there was a chill running down my spine. What should I do? Should I save them by using Revise in a different way? But in what way should I use it then?

I could only imagine the ground suddenly collapsing enabling all the prisoners to escape through a type of tunnel. Of course, I couldn't make that happen.

After a while Loyar grabbed my hand.

'Your Highness, don't worry.'

Loyar whispered to me.

'The Knights Templar are taking the prisoners out.'

With those words, I felt like my brain was freezing over again.

I then realized why I couldn't use the Revise function just then.

I could make things happen that wouldn't happen.

However, how could I use Revise to create a situation that would happen anyway?

The situation I was trying to create with Revise was the exact same happening at the moment.

They had no intentions of killing the prisoners in the first place. So I couldn't Revise this scene.

I was freaking out because I simply misunderstood the Revise function.

CHAPTER 68

It seemed that the Knights Templar were taking out the prisoners one after the other with the guards watching, probably wearing some really strange expressions. They had no way to prevent this from happening faced with the clear justification the Knights Templar held.

There should have been someone in command of these people at the scene but it seemed like he wouldn't be able to say anything. It would be pointless to say anything against the blasphemy charges or that there weren't any demon prisoners here when they were able to lead them out like a row of bound corvina.

The Empire would wash their hands of this because they didn't want this case to get any more complicated than it already was.

Even if they weren't able to catch the Empire, the Knights Templar were able to capture the greatest weaknesses of those involved in this case. It wasn't known if this case would pose a real problem for them or if they'd be able to escape using secret deals.

The most important thing, however, was that the day where the Knights Templar got to use the prisoners as evidence would never come.

'Looks like they found everyone.'

Loyar said so and glanced at Sarkegaar.

'Okay Sarkegaar. Start to take over the Warp Gate as planned.'

'Yes, Your Highness.'

-Slide!

Sarkegaar slowly slid down from the rooftop and suddenly turned into a black bird taking to the skys.

What's this?

A bird?

He could do something like that as well?

'What? Didn't you know he could do something like that?'

Seeing my stupefied expression, Eleris smiled a little.

'He can't only transform into humanoid forms.'

'…Then could I do something like that as well?'

I had this ring that enabled me to make use of his clan's powers, so I should be able to do that as well, right?

'I don't recommend it. It would probably be very uncomfortable and awkward. You also wouldn't be able to move as you want as well.'

It might be hard for me to adapt to a completely new body structure, is what Eleris meant. Dreadfiends most likely had to undergo a lot of training to be proficient in using any type of transformation. I wouldn't be able to move properly, but just knowing that the possibility was there was enough for me. I didn't know when I might have to make use of that.

'About 100 people in total. Looks like they'll be leaving now.'

'Great. Let's move as well.'

Their destination was the Knights Templar's headquarters. I was sure of that. I wasn't able to use Revise after all, so this was something that would definitely happen.

That was the Revise function's loophole. Revise wouldn't be able to be used unless it was something that wouldn't 100% happen. Using that information, I could check future developments without having to spend any achievement points.

Of course, that system bastard didn't like me exploiting loopholes, so if I try to use this too often, they might take some action again.

Anyway, we didn't have to follow the Knights Templar.

Before we left, Loyar suddenly stopped trying to get up.

'What's the matter?'

Loyar didn't respond to me and stayed focused as if she was still trying hard to listen to something.

After being quiet for a while, she wrinkled her brows.

"The Knights Templar seem to be a slightly different group than we thought."

After saying that, Loyar stood up and jumped from roof to roof.

* * *

Eleris took me with her using her magic and Loyar moved as if sweeping through the darkness, quickly heading towards the Templar's headquarters. They passed the Warp Gate.

Sarkegaar should be disguised as one of the soldiers guarding the Warp Gate. I didn't know with whom he swapped, but he did say he wouldn't kill that guy, so he must have done something else, like stunning or hypnotizing him.

"Your Highness, now you have to hide by yourself."

After arriving at the location they would launch their attack at, Eleris spoke to me, looking at me as if I shouldn't be here anymore.

"I know. But what did you mean earlier?"

I looked towards Loyar. Her expression crumpled up as if she heard something very disgusting.

"As they started to escort the prisoners, they started to laugh to themselves after they left the Merchant Guild."

What did that mean?

"They laughed?"

“They have a lot to share, they said…”

It wasn’t that I couldn’t figure out what that meant. Sharing?

“‘we just got even more’…It seems like they had some to begin with, right?”

“That seems to be the case…”

It wasn’t just the black market that took some of the prisoners.

Even the Knights Templar took some of the humanoid demons like succubi in.

“The guy that seemed to be the leader of that group responded to his subordinate’s question, if this was going to be a problem… That they could just say it’s in the name of research, That’s what the other members of the Empire’s Allied Forces used as an excuse as well… But selling them like this is a problem… is what they said…”

Loyar seemed to feel aversion towards the Knights Templar.

It wasn’t just the Imperial Family, or the Merchant Guild.

Even the Knights Templar kept demon prisoners. Judging by what they said, it was clear that all of the Allied Forces took away demon prisoners. If they were discovered, they’d just say they would keep them for research purposes.

However, the auction had no such excuse, because it was clear that they wanted to sell them. That gave the Knights Templar the right to take the prisoners away.

That was the moment where I understood why the Knights Templar came out at night.

If this information became known to the public, not only would it tarnish the prestige of the Empire, but also showcase that every faction of the Allied Forces kept demon prisoners for themselves. And among them, the Knights Templar were a group that no one expected to do something like that.

Of course, if this were revealed, they would make it seem like they took them to do research on them, but everyone would know that that wasn’t the actual reason. It’s not like people wouldn’t find out about this, just because they had some excuses prepared.

Therefore, the Knights Templar were dispatched in the middle of the night to take the prisoners with them. That way only a few people would witness this.

In the end, it turned out exactly like I predicted it would. They weren't going to execute the prisoners, they were going to take them to their headquarters.

Seeing what they were doing, all other excuses were useless.

Now that they had some form of justification, they were trying to take away the slaves from the black market on blasphemy charges. They had some as well, but still took the black market's prisoners with the excuse that their purpose was impure.

"The result is the same… Their intentions are dirty though."

In conculsion.

I overestimated their piety.

* * *

Even if we were to save them, it would only be a drop of water on a hot stone. There were so many demons taken prisoner. Each camp of the Allied forces, including the Knights Templar's headquarters held demon prisoners of war.

The number of prisoners we'd be able to save from the black market was incredibly small. It was impossible to save them all. I mean, we had to plan out this whole operation just to save 100 of them.

After splitting up from everyone, I went up a hill far away from the site. It was pretty far away, but it was still at a distance where I could see any big commotion happening.

That was when I finally was able to use the Revise function.

[You have used the 'Revise' function.]

Today, all demon prisoners, Sarkegaar, Eleris and Loyar will safely escape through the Warp Gate.

[To trigger this event 2000 achievement points are required.]

There was a high probability that a significant number of them would be able to escape safely, but it was less likely that all of them would.

Although it required a huge amount, I used the function without hesitation. There was no reason for me not to use it.

[You have spent 2000 achievement points.]

With that I felt at ease.

I didn't know what would happen exactly, but I knew that tonight's operation would definitely be successful.

-Bang!

Then I saw it.

Huge flames erupted from the square located before the Knights Templar's headquarters.

Now I knew what Eleris could do with the Flame of Tuesday.

Fierce flames began to whirl towards the sky.

A magnificent Firestorm ran havoc.

-Ruuuuuumble!

Bright light accompanied the storm raging through the air.

"N, no…"

This was supposed to be a spell to just distract them, wasn't it?

Huh? Wasn't the strategy to minimize our damages and create chaos so that they could escape using that gap?

You weren't trying to blow away both the Knights Templar and the prisoners of war, were you?

“Thi, this is kind of crossing the line, isn’t it…?”

Were you trying to kill everyone because how the Knights Templar were acting?

That was when I firmly vowed that I would never try to get on Eleris’ bad side.

* * *

Hell was let loose.

-Roooaaar!

Only after a gigantic firestorm erupted did the Knights Templar realize that they were caught up in a strange situation.

“We’re under attack!”

“A wizard!”

“Defend!”

“Cra… zy! How could they… Magic of such scale…”

About 200 members of the Knights Templar as well as 100 prisoners of war seemed to have been left unscathed by this huge firestorm.

At the center of these raging flames was a single woman.

Wearing a robe that covered everything, they witnessed this unidentified wizard controlling these huge flames while holding a type of pendant in one hand. Her whole body seemed to have been covered in a magic veil.

A wizard who could perform magic of this scale without chanting, most Paladins wanted to deny the reality that played before their eyes.

-Kuooooooooooah!

“It’s not just one!”

“It’s a demon!”

“It’s a Werewolf!”

Then, a silver furred monster appeared from behind that storm and roared loud enough to even absorb the flame storm’s sound.

This demonic beast’s roar made every person who heard it stiffen up.

It was a skill called ‘Roar’.

“Calm down! There are at least two enemies!”

The Lycanthrope moved like lightening and rushed into the Paladins. Then a Warp Gate activated in the middle of that gigantic fire storm.

The wizard pointed to the Gate while looking at the frightened prisoners. She didn’t give them a detailed explanation nor did she call out to them desperately.

Run away.

This simple gesture made these prisoners immediately understand. They were puzzled by the appearance of that wizard, but seeing the Lycanthrope made it clear to them.

They knew that they wanted to save them.

-Bang! Bobooom! Bang!

They were veteran Paladin. The Lycanthrope used its strong and agile body to fight off the Paladin who were escorting the prisoners, but some of them quickly strengthened their bodies using divine power to counterattack.

All of them held the awe-inspiring titles of Survivors of the Demon World War.

-Boom! Boom!

However, the fire storm that surrounded them struck those that blocked the Lycanthrope’s onslaught as if it were alive. The Paladin that got swallowed by the fire wouldn’t die as they had protection spells cast on them, but they wouldn’t be able to get out of there without help.

There was a Lycanthrope strong enough to be able to destroy everything in its path with just a single charge and a highly skilled magician.

But they were 200 veteran Paladin part of the Knights Templar.

“Let Als’ protection decent on our swords and bodies!”

-Flash!

The Paladin, their swords and bodies wrapped in divine power giving of a tremendous amount of light, began to charge towards the wizard.

There were only two of them.

Even though they might have been somewhat surprised before, now they were enveloped in enormous protection magic. There was no way they would be defeated by only these two enemies.

However.

-Ruumble, rumble. Ruuuuumble!

Suddenly something seemed to be growing larger and larger near the activated Gate. It grew bigger and bigger, slowly changing its form.

-Rumble! Rumble!

Something bizarrely inflated like a bubble about to burst, then it began to take the shape of a lizard with black scales.

There was slight disbelief in the eyes of all Paladin who were rushing into battle.

In the midst of this humongous Fire Storm, a winged lizard that was only supposed to exist in legends appeared.

“D, D… Dragon?”

-Roooooooaaaaaaaaar!

The Lycanthrope’s roar just now was nothing against this.

A Dragon Roar, loud enough to blow one's ears away, paralyzed the Paladin.

CHAPTER 69

At the southern end of the Empire, the border of the Kingdom of Kernstadt. Dyratanis Forest.

I was facing a destroyed Warp Gate along with three demons and a total of 107 demon prisoners.

Our rescue mission was successful.

The destroyed Warp Gate was surrounded by a lush forest and there were no guards or back up to be found.

This was an abandoned Warp Gate that didn't get maintained anymore to begin with. If we set our escape location as some large city, that would have been quite the headache, so we tried to escape to a Warp Gate that wasn't manned anymore.

The Gate in front of the Knights Templar's headquarters wasn't an Extra-large Gate, so it couldn't sent us that far away. Normal Gates, Large Gates and Extra-large Gates each had limitations in their movement distance. We had luck that the Gate in front of the headquarters was a Large Gate.

Still, this was quite a distance away.

After the operation ended successfully, Eleris broke the gate and teleported me here.

"Everyone has survived, Your Highness."

"Great. Everyone did an excellent job."

Both Sarkegaar and Loyar were unharmed. The battle itself didn't actually last that long. The moment a dragon suddenly appeared, all the Knights Templar froze, overwhelmed with this absurd situation, while the prisoners ran through the Warp Gate with everything they got.

If the battle had been prolonged, it was clear that all three of them would have been in grave danger.

The prisoners who didn't quite understand this situation, held expressions switching between relief and fear.

But it sure was strange.

As a demon, I had horns and such, but neither the succubi nor the incubi had tails or horns.

They didn't seem much different from humans.

Well, that was that.

[Quest completed – Rescue the Demon Prisoners]

[Number of rescued prisoners – 107]

[You have earned 5350 achievement points.]

I used 2000 points to end up earning more than 5000 points.

Sarkegaar, Loyar and Eleris began to untie the prisoners.

First, I should introduce myself.

"I am Valier Jr. Although, since the previous king has departed from this world, you should refer to me as Valier now."

At those words, all the demon prisoners who seemed unsure at first, began to get on their knees one after the other.

-Your Highness!

-Your Highness!

Numerous people began to bow down to me while shedding tears.

It was as if they had found a single ray of hope at the moment where they thought everything was over.

As such, everyone got on their knees, but there was one person who stayed upright.

“Valier…? You’re Valier?”

The woman who looked at me blankly seemed as if she doubted her own eyes.

“Co, could it be? Princess?”

Seeing Sarkegaar’s exceedingly shocked reaction surprised me even more.

Princess?

Didn’t he say I was the only Arcdemon left in the world?

* * *

It soon became clear why Sarkegaar called her princess.

“She is the daughter of one of the former Four Heavenly Kings, Reina, the Succubus Queen.”

“Ah… Is that so?”

The Succubus Queen.

The Four Heavenly Kings.

I had no idea about the Demon King’s side because I hadn’t properly set it up, so I didn’t even think about who the Four Heavenly Kings were supposed to be, of course. One of them seemed to be the Succubus Queen, and now her daughter somehow recognized me.

On a surface level, it appeared like the Four Heavenly Kings’ relatives were treated like royalty.

This succubus, who didn’t seem any different from a human, appeared to be of the same age as me.

…She also had pink hair.

Pink hair? Seeing that in real life was hella weird. It’s no like it didn’t look good on her. It just felt… Out of place?

The succubus approached me while pulling at her clothes that seemed closer to rags and came to a hold in front of me. There was a mix of bewilderment and hesitation visible on her face. Was she nervous?

"…Do you not recognize me? I'm Airi. Don't you remember me?"

The next Succubus Queen, who introduced herself as Airi, was stunned at me not recognizing her.

"His Highness almost lost all of his memories of the Demon Realm, Princess."

"……Why?"

"We don't know either."

The pink-haired Princess seemed to be at a loss for words.

The succubus, who called herself Airi, seemed very perplexed by Sarkegaar's answer.

"Did you know me? Although I do not know what kinds of memories you had with me, I'm really sorry. I can't remember anything."

At those words, Airi, who was in front of me, as well as the numerours other succubi behind her held some weird expressions on their faces. What? What did I do to them? Were they glad I lost my memory?

Airi rolled her eyes in confusion, but eventually nodded hesitantly.

"Whatever may have happened before… Thank you for saving me. I didn't expect you to be alive, but… I'm glad… That you're alive…"

Airi seemed to have thought that I died immediately on that day. Certainly, the way I ended up surviving was very pathetic. However, if it was the original Valier he wouldn't have been able to do anything, but miserably shout "Do you even know who I am?!" while getting his head chopped off.

"Good. Everything's fine. Let's go over there and have a talk."

I took Airi to another part of the forest. I could feel her shyly following behind me. I didn't know what relationship she had with me before, but it certainly didn't seem

like a good one. I felt like she was staring holes in my head.

“Like Sarkegaar said, I have lost all my memories of my time in the Demon Realm, and, to be honest, I don’t feel like recovering them again. I apologize if I did anything to you.”

I slowly got used to apologizing for things I don’t even remember doing. However, Airi’s eyes simply widened at my words.

“N, no… That’s… You don’t have to apologize to me. Ra, rather, I…”

Airi seemed very startled and quickly covered her mouth with her hand.

“……Huh?”

“Ah, tha, that… A, about that…”

What?

Wasn’t this flow different from the other times? Looking at it like this, she seemed very surprised that I actually saved her, right?

She didn’t keep staring at me because she was afraid of me, huh?

Was it because she was sure that I would never come to save her?

“Did you bully me?”

“Ah, ah, that! That’s! That!”

That was right.

I didn’t know about the other guys, but I didn’t think I bullied her. It was the exact opposite.

“I, I’m sorry!”

Airi was so out of her mind, because she got saved by the kid she bullied in the past.

* * *

According to what Airi told me while trembling, we were something like childhood friends before the Demon World War broke out.

To precise, she wasn't really my friend, but the kid in charge of me. It seemed like Airi would educate me through beating every time I acted like a bastard somewhere. Actually, this was only possible because we were both treated as royalty, even though we were of different races.

So, whenever I saw Airi when I was on my own it seemed like I'd book it or when I was next to the Demon King I'd start trembling terribly.

So we hated each other. Actually, I got beaten up by her all day long.

Like I treated Loyar like a dog, it seemed like I got bullied a lot by the succubi. Every time Airi saw me she would beat me up.

She probably was that strong because she was, different from the normal succubi, the descendant of the Succubus Queen.

The Succubus Queen seemed to have been the number 2 of the Four Heavenly Kings.

So, Airi was the daughter of the Demon Realm's Number 3. That meant that she was able to educate the Demon King's son when he was messing around.

She had a very high status in the Demon Realm. Seeing as these titles were hereditary, I'd become the Demon King and she'd become the demon with the third highest rank.

All of the Four Heavenly Kings died and Airi was taken prisoner after our defeat.

And then she was saved by the Demon King's son, whom she thought would have already died, and had a bad relationship with since their childhood.

So she seemed to find this situation hard to believe. Of course, she seemed to be convinced that I lost my memories to some extent.

"Let's leave what happened in the past behind us. I wouldn't want to take revenge on you anyway. Even if I don't quite remember how I was, I heard that I was someone who deserved to get beaten up."

“Tha, that…”

Airi couldn’t say anything to that. This sure made me wonder just how crazy I actually was.

Still, seeing that she was the one in charge of me, it didn’t seem to be that serious.

“Let’s stop talking about this. Do you know the detailed composition of the prisoners here?”

“There are 85 Succubi, 15 Incubi, 2 Lycanthropes, 2 Doppelgangers and 2 Nightwalkers.”

Most of them were succubi and incubi. I didn’t quite know what Nightwalkers were, but all of them were humanoid demons.

“How about your strength? I heard that the humans have done something to you, but what did they do exactly?”

At that, Airi closed her eyes. Just imagining it made her remember the pain.

“What’s the matter?”

“Ah… You said that you lost your memories, so could it be…”

Airi looked at me in disbelief that I couldn’t tell just by looking at her. She eventually lifted her pink hair a bit after she recalled that I lost all my memories.

I couldn’t see it before because she was covering it with her long hair.

There were hideous wounds at her temples as if something got ripped out from there.

“The humans… Removed all of our horns and tails…”

It wasn’t like they simply didn’t have any horns.

In order to neutralize the succubi’s and incubi’s power, the humans forcibly removed their tails and horns.

Tears were dripping down Airi's face when she remembered the disgrace she felt that day.

Airi told me that the horns were usually the source of magical power for horned demons.

That said, now that her horns were gone, Airi lost all her magical powers and all her growth potential.

As a result, she also lost her racial skill. She lost all her abilities, such as absorbing spirit and entering other people's dreams.

"Wi, will they grow back… Or are they gone for good?"

"They can grow back, but it takes a long time… It would be the same as if I didn't have any to begin with. Not only that, the humans also took other actions."

"What do you mean?"

"Human wizards destroyed all our magic management facilities in our bodies. Even if our horns were to grow back, we wouldn't be able to use magic ever again… That's how it is."

They were trying to sell absolutely safe toys to the wealthy and powerful. Therefore, while destroying their source of magical power they also made it impossible for them to ever manipulate magical power again. The wizards succeeded in completely neutralizing these prisoners.

Although she was a high-ranking demon with the title of Succubus Queen, Airi lost all her strength and growth potential.

"I'm sorry, Valier… We can't even fathom fully paying you back for saving us… I'm so grateful and I really want to help you in any way possible, but… We've all become useless…"

Airi looked down and started to cry. They all must have been demons with enormous powers. And among them, Airi, the Succubus Queen, had, or was very likely to have, the most power of them all.

However, they had lost all their potential. So Airi seemed to feel guilty, knowing that

she couldn't repay me for my help in any way.

"……I didn't save you because of that though."

"……Huh?"

At my words, Airi looked at me with a tear smeared face.

"I didn't save you because I planned on using you. I did it because I thought I could."

That was the truth. There was also the possibility to earn a ton of achievement points but that was only secondary. I had no interest in rebuilding the Demon Realm to begin with, but Eleris, Sarkegaar and Loyar wanted to save them so desperately, so I just told them how to do it.

I wasn't interested in their powers enough to cause a riot in the middle of the Imperial Capital for just about 100 prisoners in the first place.

It would be rather sad for them to have lost all their powers, but there was no reason for me to be disappointed about that.

"So, you guys can go back to the Darklands or whatever. My goal was to save you, so you don't have to be at my beck and call or something after this."

If they wanted to go back to the Darklands, Eleris would send them there using mass teleport. Airi was staring at me blankly for a long time. She never imagined she'd ever hear me say something like that.

CHAPTER 70

You don't have to be at my beck and call, so if you want to go back to the Darklands you can do that.

After instructing Airi to deliver my message to all of the prisoners, I held a meeting with Sarkegaar, Eleris and Loyar in a secluded place.

"Everyone worked hard. No one got hurt, so we achieved the best result."

"It is all thanks to your brilliant wit and bravery."

Sarkegaar sprinkled me with flattery again, while Eleris smiled.

"To be honest, we were lucky. They were frozen for quite a bit after they saw a dragon appearing in the middle of the raid."

"That sure was surprising."

Sarkegaar took the form of a dragon, so it wasn't a real dragon that showed up.

Dragons were legendary creatures to begin with, so there were no eyewitness accounts. He simply took the form of what people thought a dragon would look like. Dragons didn't exist, and even if they did exist, no one knew whether they'd look the same as people imagined them to look like.

If the Paladin awakened from their stupor a bit faster, some of the prisoners might not have been able to be rescued, or either Loyar or Eleris might have gotten seriously hurt or killed.

I was terrified of what would have happened if I didn't use the Revise function to make sure everyone would be safe. Anyway, I was glad that it turned out the way it did.

"I heard you told the prisoners that they could decide where they would like to go themselves?"

I nodded at Loyar's question.

"If they could go back to the Darklands and live in peace, that would be better. There's no need to overdo it."

Secretly infiltrating 100 people into the Capital wasn't something I could do at my level in the first place. They also lost their magic abilities. It was already difficult enough to protect myself, so it was impossible for me to protect them as well.

Therefore, it would be best if they were to return to the Darklands, which was still relatively untouched by the humans.

* * *

After a while.

After Airi told me that they were done talking among themselves, I returned to the place where the prisoners gathered.

They all looked sad. They probably heard from Eleris and Sarkegaar what I was doing here. That I infiltrated the Imperial Capital and attended Temple to rebuild the Demon Realm.

The Prince was plotting such a great thing in the middle of the enemy camp and they felt so pathetic that they couldn't help in the least. They felt like they were only a burden in their present state.

"Has everyone decided?"

Airi nodded at my question.

"Almost everyone has decided to go back to the Darklands…"

We took the risk to save Airi and the rest, so they seemed apologetic that they couldn't do anything for us. She probably hated me a lot in the past, but she genuinely seemed sorry for having teased and bullied me.

"No need to be sorry. Forget about fighting and war. Just live peacefully."

As if they were touched by my consideration, they began to tear up. They would be

sent deep into the Darklands where no human could touch them.

Their pride as high-ranking demons disappeared along with their horns. There were other races here as well, but they seemed to have judged that they wouldn't be of any help to us either.

It certainly seemed to be the much better option for them to live their lives freely in the Darklands than to live as slaves for humans.

"I shall prepare the spell then."

Eleris began preparing the mass teleport spell. It was night time and they were just that many. If she cast it twice, she should be able to teleport all of them to the Darklands. After about an hour or so, Eleris was able to send most of the prisoners to the Darklands.

"……"

"……"

I was staring blankly at those who were still left here.

"Aren't you guys returning as well?"

About 11 succubi, including Airi, remained here. They kept looking at me.

No.

She did tell me that almost all of them would return. Then that would mean that there were some who didn't want to return, huh?

"…We don't want to go back."

Airi spoke as their representative.

"…No, what do you want to do then, if you don't want to go back?"

"We aren't able to do much and we wouldn't be much help in a fight, but I'm still a Royal of the Demon Realm. You're working so hard as well, Valier, so I can't just go back to the Darklands, forget about everything that happened and live comfortably."

Airi seemed to think that I, who had a dog-like personality before, was completely helpless hiding in the heart of the Empire, so she wanted to be of some help to me as a Royal of the Demon Realm. The other ten thought similarly.

No, it seemed like they made up their mind.

I knew that they really wanted to be loyal to me, and repay their debt to me, but what were they even going to do staying here?

"We have lost all our strength. I know we won't be of much help, but these bodies are the only weapons we have left to offer."

"……So what are you going to do?"

Airi looked at me with determination radiating from her face.

"You need money to live in the Human Realm."

"That's right."

"And I know that sometimes huge amounts of money could pose a great threat to the Human Realm itself."

I didn't know if there would be a financial crisis in the Empire some time in the future, but there was no law that it wouldn't happen. So what was it she wanted to say?

"Doing business, Valier."

What did she mean by that?

"If we could achieve great commercial success and hold the Empire's gold coins in our hands, it would be of great help in restoring the Demon Realm."

"Ooh, that's a great plan. As expected of Her Highness the Princess. I can't help but admire your wisdom."

I mean, she isn't wrong. Sarkegaar was nodding and responding as if her words were plausible enough.

“After re-establishing enough power, if we had a firm grasp on the Human Realm’s money, we could win against the humans without fighting in a war. We could also divide the Empire and send it spiraling down into chaos. We have only used force up until now to fight wars, but this time we shall use any means available to us.”

Listening to Airi’s words, Eleris‘ expression became more and more complicated.

It was an expression that seemed to shout *“No, what is that little brat saying to my kid?”*.

The Succubus Queen, a high-ranking demon, was advising me to first seize the monetary strength of the Empire to lead it to its demise. I get that she was trying to overthrow the Empire but wasn’t that a rather unconventional advice? Rather than saying “Let’s destroy them with strength and magic!” she went “Let’s cause a great economic depression in the Empire!” instead.

But in the end, she was right.

However, what did that have to do with them not wanting to go back?

“Erm… You’re right. You’re absolutely right, but there’s no way I’d be any good with commerce and finances. I’m still attending Temple as well… And as far as I know, commerce requires a huge amount of capital. We don’t have that much money though.”

There was nothing we could do but turn to crime or exploit Eleris’ magic. I had no desire to do that though.

“You don’t have to worry about that.”

Airi pointed at herself and the remaining succubi, as if she had already thought about the capital issue.

“…What’s with you?”

“If you sell us as slaves to humans, you’d be able to make a lot of money. That money should be enough if you use it as capital…”

“Huh? What kind of bullshit is this?!”

I just saved you from becoming slaves, so why the hell are you telling me to sell you as slaves to get money?

When I shouted at her, Airi cried out.

“Still, this is the best we can do for you! This is the only way we can be of use to you in this situation. Otherwise we are completely useless! If I can take revenge on the humans by throwing away my petty pride, I can do it hundred times over!”

“Frickin hell!”

Perhaps because I told her that I forgot all about what I had done, Airi seemed willing to even die for this cause.

“Valier, we have made our decision. You don’t have to worry. If it’s for rebuilding the Demon Realm, tis but a cheap price to pay. So…”

-Your Highness!

-Your Highness!

Behind her, the succubi were calling out to me as if chanting.

“Shut up, you guys!”

There was a limit to how much bullshit I could deal with.

Regardless of whether I shouted at them or not, the succubi cried and begged me to sell them.

This was driving me crazy.

* * *

After rescuing the succubi from the black market to the best of our abilities, they decided to become slaves again in the hopes of rebuilding the Demon Realm.

Some of them returned, but there were 11, including Airi, who remained, trying to repay the kindness they received even if they had to do something like this, to become my starting point in seizing the Empire’s finances for the reconstruction of

the Demon Realm.

Wasn't this just too weird, even if this story line was already crazy enough? They said that they want to sell themselves at a high price, raise capital for me, enabling me to seize the Empire's commercial sphere and create total chaos when we decide to go to war again.

Of course, this was absolutely unacceptable. Sarkegaar did say that it would be a good idea, already moving the abacus in his head, but quickly shut his mouth when he saw that I was being serious.

Apparently, they felt very desperate after having lost all their power, and seemed to have thought that this would be the only way they could be of any use to us.

Considering Airi's words that we should have a firm grasp on the Empire's money, being able to shake their economy, this was certainly a very plausible scenario. Given that I was extremely gifted in commerce. Of course, I wasn't.

I mean, I didn't even spare the stock market a single glance in my past life. I didn't have a single clue about all this.

When I grew furious and told her that this would never ever happen, Airi began thinking of other ways.

"Then how about we all join a brothel and send you a certain amount of money every month? It won't be a huge sum, but still…"

"…Why does your mind always wander into that direction?"

Why was it like this? Was it because she was succubus? I thought I'd rather die than get them to send me the money they earned after they sold themselves like this.

Rather than accepting it, I'd sent it right back to them.

"It's a pity that you lost your horns and tails, but like this you wouldn't have much trouble fitting into human society. If you really want to help me, don't do things like that. The Capital is dangerous, so you have to keep your distance from it. For now you will need an identity."

Of course, I knew that succubi absorbed spirit to grow stronger through such

actions, but weren't they made incapable of that? In that case, there would be no reason for me to earn money through these kind of things.

"Are we… No good?"

I sighed at her question.

"Hey, I don't know if that might come off as rude, considering you are succubi, but I really don't want you guys to do that kind of work, okay? And I don't even want to touch money earned like that. Being loyal and wanting to reconstruct the Demon Realm is good and all, but how could there be a Demon Realm without demons? There can be demons without the Demon Realm though. I really don't care if you leave and find your own way to live. You hear?"

"Well, Your Highness! If there is no Demon Realm, the demons as a…"

"Shut up!"

"Yes, Your Highness…"

Sarkegaar tried to interrupted, but after I shouted at him he kept his silence, albeit appearing slightly crushed.

The succubi began to shed tears again when I told them to find their own way to live happily, but they still wanted to remain loyal to me.

Whatever I did was counterproductive.

They just saw me as nothing more than a benevolent monarch, so no matter what I said it would only strengthen their loyalty towards me.

No! I wasn't some benevolent monarch, I sincerely just wanted you guys to go on with your life! This was just too annoying!

"I'm not exactly sure what you can do, but I'm sure there's something you can do well enough. How about driving wagons or carrying bricks?"

I imagined a scene were the Succubus Queen was doing manual labor. Wasn't that even worse actually? No, I mean, it's true, right?

“But it would be very difficult to raise enough capital to take over the Imperial Financial World through such means…”

I had nothing to say to that.

“It’s okay to do whatever you want as long as it’s not these kinds of things. You could work in a bar, in an inn or start a transportation business, everything’s fine.”

Even just imagining the succubi becoming a continental transportation conglomerate made me almost laugh out loud, but there was nothing I could do about that.

Airi kept her mouth shut and didn’t open it again for a while, as if she was thinking about this.

She said that she wanted to be useful to the best of her abilities, even at the risk of putting herself in harm’s way, but she seemed really sad when I refused her like that.

“…Hmm… Okay, Valier. I don’t know how to do much else, but I’d never do something you wouldn’t like.”

If I was the real Valier, I would feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment hearing my former bully say something like that in front of me.

I, however, just felt really burdened by what Airi was doing.

“I will make sure to become someone who’ll be able to help you in any way possible.”

Seeing that expression on her face, saying that she would do anything I wanted her to do, made me feel insanely burdened because I felt like she would really do anything I asked her to do.

Of course, I wouldn’t be able to change her mind by force, so I had to find another way. I clearly knew that.

But well.

She’s a succubus…

And a Queen at that…

That's.

We're both something like royalty, so we would be of the same status…

Well…

Ah, I can't do that.

I mean, I'm still underage in this life!

CHAPTER 71

I made Airi promise some things to me. *"Don't do anything dangerous until I tell you otherwise, and don't even think about starting anything without having a proper method to hide your identity from the humans".*

The most important thing was getting an identity. Not in the Capital of the Empire or one of its Principalities, or any other large city, but in a rural place at the outskirts of some country.

This part was provided by Loyar and Eleris.

I didn't know what Airi would do from now on, but I was sure that she understood what I meant. Since Eleris was by my side, I was also able to go see her periodically using teleportation.

"You absolutely have to dye your hair."

"Huh? Ah…, Yes."

Pink hair was just too much. She was at the black market, but there were surely some people who saw Airi. It was fortunate enough that she wasn't identified as the Succubus Queen's daughter. If she were, she wouldn't have appeared on the black market.

Of course, only a few actually had seen a succubus before. Frankly speaking, even if she went to a city on the outskirts of the Empire, her identity wouldn't be revealed. No one would notice the marks left behind by the removal of her horns and tail unless she deliberately showed them to someone, and even if they were to see them, they'd only appear like some severe wounds. No one would think that these were wounds left behind by removing horns and tails.

"First we have to decide where you should go‥…"

Airi was planning on raising money to seize the Financial World of the Empire. I honestly thought that this was quite impossible, but Airi seemed to need a goal for now.

She needed something she could focus on to overcome her despair. That was why I was trying to think of something for her even though I didn't believe it was possible.

Where could I send Airi to do business and her identity wouldn't be revealed?

Let's think about that.

"First of all, it should be a place that housed a lot of travelers. If there are many people coming and going it wouldn't be considered weird if you guys suddenly appeared there."

Loyar nodded her head at my words.

"Yes, if they went to a small village where everyone knew each other, that might be rather suspicious. If we're talking about a place with a lot of travelers, that would probably be a trading hub."

Everyone agreed with Loyar. If it were city that served as a trading hub, it would be easy to do business there and it had a large floating population.

Additionally, a trading city would be an important transportation hub as well.

All cities with Extra-Large Warp Gates were playing that role. People who used Large Gates or Normal Gates usually flocked to these places.

If we were to compare it to subway stations, an Extra Large Warp Gate was like a transfer station, so it naturally was crowded.

In a nutshell, any place that held Extra Large Warp Gates would be a transportation hub.

"A place with an Extra Large Warp Gate would be very convenient. Places like that could be reached immediately after a person of the Empire passed through two or three other gates."

So I had to consider one possibility.

"Are there any maritime trading hubs that don't have any gates? Even a regular trading hub would be fine as long as they don't have any gates."

In the Empire, there was a huge number of Warp Gates, but that was only possible for the Empire. In the outskirts, there were many towns that didn't have any Warp Gates, and there still must be trade that depended on regular transportation using wagons. Of course, if there were no gates, the amount of money flowing around the city would be relatively small, but safety was our number one priority here.

Right now we didn't have something like a Map of the Empire, so we couldn't make any judgements by looking at one.

"How about the Edina Archipelago?"

Was there a place like that? I never wrote anything about it. There were many places like that so I wasn't actually surprised. It went without saying that I didn't know much about it.

However, if it was an archipelago, it definitely was an island area.

"Where is it?"

"It's an island country beyond the southern waters of Kernstadt. I heard that their trade is only dependent on sea trade with Kernstadt, because it's too far away and there are no gates connecting them to the continent. I remember that there are gates connecting the islands together, but there are no gates connecting them to the main land."

"It is an island…"

If so, even if her identity got discovered, it would take a long time until the Empire could begin their pursuit. It was a very distant country, so it was clear that they didn't have much interest in the Empire's internal affairs.

The actual size of their economy might not be that large, but I didn't really want to become a big player anyway, I just needed to have that awareness that I did something at least.

"What do you think?"

As I was looking at her, Airi nodded.

"If the gates only connect to the other islands and foreign trade is conducted through

ships, goods would be concentrated at the most prosperous port city on the islands. I'm sure there would be a lot of people as well…"

I didn't know how big their population was, but if there were only a few people living there, it wouldn't be called a country. Airi nodded, saying that she could be at ease if we sent her there.

However, I was still slightly worried.

"Will it really be okay?"

"Yes."

She boldly said that she was willing to do anything. She looked about my age, so she was still a kid. I felt so bad for her that I felt like dying.

And that wasn't why I asked if it would be okay.

"People in port cities tend to be rough, that's why I asked you."

A sailor would die if they weren't quick on their feet. So there were a lot of quick-tempered and rough people among them. It was basically a fact that there were a lot of gangsters near the shores where the goods gathered, but that affected the people living there as well, giving them no other choice but to adopt that rough behavior.

I had no idea what kind of business they planned on opening there, but I believed they were very likely to go into the maritime trade. So the succubi would work as employees then?

Just imagining it would make me think of many troublesome things coming their way.

"Aah… We are only physically weakened for now. Although we won't be able to use magic anymore as our mana management facilities have been broken, our physical abilities will return soon."

It seemed like they were only weak for now, soon their strength would be restored. The other succubi also didn't seem to worry about that.

"Can you handle those people?"

“Your Highness.”

As if she knew what I was worried about, Loyar called out to me.

“Huh. What is it?”

“Well… Put in different terms, Her Highness the Princess would be Your Highness’ senior martial sister.”

“Senior martial sister?”

Masters, disciples, senior martial brother, junior martial sister, senior martial sister. Was it that type of deal? Why did such a martial arts setting suddenly pop up?

So did that mean she was older than me? Was I supposed to call her big sister or something?

“Yes. Your Highness and Her Highness both learned swordsmanship from Sir Larkan Simonstite, who was the first of the Four Heavenly Kings.”

Who now?

“……Did we? But why can’t I perform any type of swordsmanship at all? Is it because I lost my memory?”

There was no sign of my body remembering any of that swordsmanship though? It was still called pseudo-swordsmanship in my status window.

Of course it would be seriously weird for me to know any of that stuff because I didn’t even have the original Valier’s memory, but shouldn’t there be at least something that had been ingrained into this body?

Loyar shook her head with a firm look hearing my remarks.

“Even if you were to remember these days, you probably wouldn’t gain any of it.”

“……So I was just loafing around and getting beat up all day?”

“Yes.”

Since I hadn't learned it properly to begin with, saying that I wouldn't be able to use swordsmanship even if I remembered those days was kind of harsh. Airi wore a vague expression on her face, hearing Loyar's words. It seemed like she had trouble overlapping the person she knew with the one I am today.

"So?"

"The Princess was an honor student on the other hand."

You're not even at a level where you could worry about her because she's on a completely different level. That was what Loyar was trying to tell me politely.

"So, even if you can't use your magic, you'd still have enough power to give those bastards a beating?"

"Ah, yes… That's how it is…"

Although she was weakened at the moment, she was still the Succubus Queen's daughter and seemed to have been training her body all this time. I see. In fact, she was really good at fighting, so she must have beaten up this damn Valier a lot.

Although we were taught by the same person, I just slacked off while Airi studied hard.

So, even in this situation where she almost lost all her power she had at least one thing she could rely on.

"Good. Then let's do it like this, although it's a bit unfortunate that we don't have the means to contact each other in case of an emergency, but that's a small price to pay to avoid the Empire pulling anything."

I had no idea what they were capable of doing, but I hoped that they just would be able to live happily without getting caught.

Considering my conduct at Temple, that's definitely not a path I could take anymore.

For the time being, I decided to let Eleris take care of the ten succubi and the Succubus Queen. We would need some basic capital as well so Loyar also decided to send Eleris.

Eleris started casting mass teleport to send me, Sarkegaar and Loyar back.

“The atmosphere of the Capital will soon tense up. You’d better return to Temple right away.”

I nodded at Eleris words. Eleris, who could do so many things with her magic, was also leaving for a bit to help out Airi.

It would be best to just return to Tempel and lay low. Airi looked at me with an expression displaying a complicated mix of emotions. Then she carefully opened her mouth.

“It is said that people show their true face when they are in a crisis.”

‘People’ refered to all humanoid intelligent beings, so it was not wrong to refer to me as ‚People‘.

“What’s the matter?”

“You said that you lost your memory… That would mean that this is your true face.”

Airi looked at me with a smile on her face, and placing a hand on my shoulder.

“If that’s the case, then you absolutely deserve to be our King.”

Perhaps she just finished her re-evaluation of me in her mind, so Airi seemed to trust me. Someone I didn’t even know who bullied and hated me ended up trusting me.

Perhaps because the end result was the only thing that mattered to me, I felt quite good about that. Airi was the Succubus Queen, so depending on her growth, she could become a strong ally.

However, she did say that she lost all her growth potential.

I got one more ally, but I can’t tell if I’m happy about that or not.

“I was told you were my senior martial sister.”

“Ah… Yeah. Although we didn’t really have that many lessons together.”

We shared the same teacher and we were both part of the Demon Realm's Royalty as well.

"Take good care of yourself. If anything happens, tell me."

"……Yes."

We didn't actually come from the same place, and she wasn't actually my childhood friend, but just knowing that she shared some memories with this body's former owner made me want to get along with her.

* * *

After hearing rumors about demons getting sold on the black market, we tried rescuing them and finally managed to save 107 demons.

Among them was the daughter of the Succubus Queen who was Royalty same as me. Without my intervention, Airi would have ended up leading a miserable life. However, in the end, Airi couldn't be of any help to me so she tried doing something on her own.

As such, Airi took off to do business in the port city of the Edina Archipelago south of Kernstadt, unknown to even me, the writer.

The ending of this incident ended up being slightly boring. If I were to get my hands on an Elixir with which I could restore Airi's condition, things would be slightly different.

Of course, I didn't know if I would ever get one of these.

I had no clue what kind of existence the Succubus Queen was, but she was one of the Four Heavenly Kings of the Demon Realm.

Even Eleris, who had overwhelming magical power, wasn't part of the Four Heavenly Kings. That might have meant that Airi's potential was far greater than Eleris'. Of course, Airi seriously seemed to want to rebuild the Demon Realm, but I just really hoped to get one more strong person under me before the Gates eventually appeared. When that happened, it wouldn't matter whether one was a demon or a human.

In the end, I got the Succubus Queen as my ally after this whole ordeal. She would travel to a place with no Gate connecting to the mainland in sight, so I could only meet her through Eleris, however, I felt more relieved that she would be in a safe place rather than feeling inconvenienced.

The next day.

I was listening to the superintendent's instructions along with the others who decided to stay behind.

"As for now, all students are prohibited from going out of Temple until instructed otherwise. If there are any people returning from outside, let them know as well."

In this chaotic situation, Temple issued a ban on going out. Shortly after the Victory Festival started, a terrorist incident presumed to be caused by demons occurred within the Imperial Capital.

There were no fatalities, but the Knights Templar were attacked in the middle of the night and many saw a huge firestorm illuminating the night sky.

Those who had already returned to their home didn't know about this piece of news, however, if they were to return they wouldn't be allowed to leave Temple until this case was settled.

Therefore, there weren't many remaining inside of Temple.

What I caused was rather abnormal, and I fully knew that. I pretty much expected what would happen next.

"The whole festival has been canceled."

"That's right. This is just too abnormal."

Kayer nodded his head at Kono Lint's words.

The Victory Festival should have lasted for the whole month, according to the original.

However, it ended now after only a few days. It was only natural that the people who gathered here were overcome with a sense of fear by this sudden act of terrorism.

During this grand festival celebrating the annihilation of the demons, something like that happened in the middle of the Imperial Capital. This was worse than smearing shit all over the Emperor's face. The Empire would do everything to track down those demons that had fled through a Warp Gate.

This would lead to information about the black market coming to light.

The truth that there were people trying to open up a secret auction with some prisoners of war they stole as merchandise, and some other demons tried to rescue their captured brethren.

The Empire, that only mentioned that demons were able to infiltrate the Capital and that they should get destroyed, tried to sell them as sex slaves.

I was the one who smashed the honor of the Empire to pieces.

The atmosphere in the Empire would quickly turn into a grievous one, and it would stay that way for quite some time.

[Achievement earned – Deviation from the Original]

[Due to your actions the main story has been changed]

[You have earned 500 Achievement Points.]

Along with those changes came some achievement points.

The main story had been changed.

I wasn't exactly sure what that meant. The grand festival that took place in the Imperial Capital was more like a background settinh, not really part of the main story.

The main storyline was what Ludwig experienced and went through during the Festival, as I mentioned before.

"I can't believe that there were demons inside of the Imperial Capital…"

I could hear that Ludwig's nervous voice.

“I’m scared…”

And B-9, Delphine Izadra, was muttering in fear.

My actions caused the Temple students to get locked up in here, so the ‘Delphine Izadra Kidnapping’ event completely disappeared.

CHAPTER 72

Originally, right now was supposed to be the Festival period, so Ludwig should have been so excited that he and his best friends, Number 9 and 10, Delphine Izadra and Lanian Sesor, decided to roam around the whole Festival area.

Then they would have eventually lost Delphine in the crowd. Later they would find out that Delphine, who they thought just got separated from them, actually got kidnapped by a powerful gang. Ludwig would report this to the guards, however completely disregarded their order to wait at Temple, and would go around looking for Delphine together with Lenian Sesor.

Ludwig would find the bad guys after some time and fought them to save his friend.

And he somehow ended up dishing out a huge blow loaded with spirit that sent all of them flying.

Ludwig, who was last ranked, didn't have that much confidence in himself, even though he was part of the Royal Class. However, this beginning part, after he studied a bit at Temple, was supposed to display that he was incomparably strong, completely different from ordinary people. In fact, Ludwig had a great physical talent, so he was quite athletic and strong.

The kidnapping of a Temple student was still equal to a disaster, but I wrote this improbable development to showcase that Ludwig was really strong.

Anyway, I thought it was quite fortunate that one of those stupid developments I created disappeared because of my actions.

I really didn't want Delphine to go through this horrible experience. Of course, Delphine was already pretty close to Ludwig, but this event made them grow even closer.

Anyway.

That was a pretty bizarre experience.

Delphine had no idea that she was actually about to be abducted, nor did she know that she was spared from that because of a different outlandish incident.

She was just afraid that some demons caused a massive terrorist attack on the Imperial Capital.

I didn't want to sound condescending, but wasn't it actually me who saved her? However, I was the only one who knew that. It was quite the subtle feeling.

Anyway, Temple was drenched in a somber atmosphere because that huge incident happened in the Capital. The scenery outside would be in an even more grievous state. It was also clear as day that the Emperor was probably more than furious as well.

* * *

"This means the Demons weren't completely destroyed."

"Could it be that an even stronger Demon King is hiding somewhere? Nothing like that ever happened during the war."

The next morning.

The children were competing who had the wildest imagination.

They were only children, but for the adults this had other implications. It was obvious that they hadn't completely annihilated the Demon Realm, and just this level of terrorism was enough to throw the Capital into great chaos.

This action of rescuing some prisoners consequently made the humans aware that now wasn't the time to celebrate a victory, but to be wary of the Demon Realm's remnants. Was this a good thing or did this doom the Demon Realm completely?

However, this was the choice Sarkegaar, Eleris, Loyar, and I made.

Although we were able to rescue 107 demons, as a result we greatly stimulated the humans' vigilance.

There were a total of 6 people left in the Class A dormitory.

Number 2, Ellen Artorius

Number 3, Liana de Grantz

Number 7, Adelia

Number 8, Kono Lint

Number 10, Cayer Vioden

And me. Everyone except Number 3 were commoners, who didn't have a reason to go back home. In Number 3's case, her family had a mansion in the Imperial Capital, as such she returned home every Friday. So, despite this long break, she came back to Temple yesterday.

Since there was a terrorist attack on the Capital, the Grantz Family probably thought that it would be better for her to return to Temple, which would be much safer than staying in the mansion. That was why this girl didn't seem to be in such a good mood. She was supposed to be resting in her mansion, but was forced to go back to school.

Of course, the vacation would continue, so there would be nothing to do at Temple.

Ellen was training as per usual, no matter if a terrorist attack broke out in the Capital or not, and I joined her.

After sparing for quite some time, with my sword ending up clattering on the gym floor again, I flopped down on the ground exhausted. As Ellen quietly looked at me, she asked me something.

"Why did they do that?"

I tilted my head at her question.

"What?"

"The demons. Why did they do that?"

Ellen didn't really talk about this matter before, but she seemed to have some doubts. Just why would the demons attack the Imperial Capital? She held such curiosity. Our usually insensitive Ellen wouldn't pay much attention to such events,

but she seemed to be curious on the inside.

“H, how should I know?”

The fact that the demons were doing this to rescue their brethren who were about to be traded away on an auction wasn’t known by many people. If that truth were to be revealed later, that would cause some serious waves.

Come to think of it, that would be the case.

It’s highly likely that the truth would never come to light.

“I just don’t know why they would fight the Knights Templar.”

The Knights Templar were like a natural enemy to demons. Of course, not all demons would be affected by their powers, but all undead type demons were insanely vulnerable to divine power. In fact, Eleris, a vampire, was fighting her most powerful natural enemy.

“If they wanted to take revenge, shouldn’t they have attacked a different place if they were able to infiltrate the Capital?”

Ellen had quite many doubts.

She didn’t understand why the demons decided to attack the Knights Templar, because Ellen didn’t know about the demon prisoners. As such, her question was valid. Most people, however, wouldn’t even think about that.

Because in their eyes, demons were simply evil.

Just by believing in that single sentence most people gave up thinking about such matters. However, Ellen was putting herself in the demon’s shoes, treating them as intelligent beings the same as humans.

Ellen was raising a valid question. If they wanted revenge, it probably would have been better if they attacked the Emperor instead of the Knights Templar.

“I think they know something we don’t.”

Ellen believed that the demons had some purpose rather than just being angry at

their actions. They had no reason to attack the Knights Templar. She was convinced that they had a hidden reason why they did something like that. In the end Ellen, who didn't seem to hate the demons nor choose to simply dismiss these events, inferred that they must have had a reason for all this.

If I really were a Demon Prince dreaming of rebuilding the Demon Realm, this would have been the moment where I realized that Ellen had to be eliminated. She was dangerous. She wasn't an enemy that feared us or despised us, but an enemy that tried to understand our actions.

"If they had something like that, it would be revealed soon."

But honestly, the only thing I thought was that she was pretty smart.

Come to think of it, I was quite weird.

I was disqualified as a human being because I led the demons to terrorize the Imperial Capital.

And I was also disqualified as a demon because the only thing going through my head while watching humanity's strongest hero growing more and more dangerous was that she was really smart.

I couldn't believe that I wasn't qualified to stand on any of these sides.

Just what am I even doing?

* * *

As there were still vacations and the school banned its students from going out, my routine like daily life continued. I did nothing but train with Ellen constantly. I ate breakfast after doing my early morning training, I ate lunch after my morning training, I trained more after lunch and even more after dinner before having some late night snacks.

I didn't conduct my supernatural power training separately. The more one used a supernatural power, the more familiar one got with it, and I was training with Ellen, who could blow me away even if I used my power to its fullest.

In other words, sparing with Ellen was already more than enough, so I didn't have to

train my supernatural ability separately.

Strictly speaking, I was somewhat familiar with these self-made voluntary routines. Most people had to continue this involuntary routine of going to work and returning home. It was somewhat passive, and yet compulsory.

However, as a writer, I had to continue writing even though no one was forcing me to. The result was, well… We see the result here. Even though it was like that, I still wrote it voluntarily though.

So, I had the mental fortitude to continue this, even if no one asked me to do it.

Writing just got replaced with daily physical training.

However.

Although I was fine with this routine, I sometimes felt like I was about to go crazy. Even though the outside world was thrown into chaos, destruction and despair because of the terrorist attack by the demons, inside Temple everything was calm and silent, as if we were in a different world.

So even I, who caused this incident, almost forgot about it.

“Hey, aren’t you bored?”

So, the day before our regular school life would start again, on Sunday morning, I muttred as I looked at Ellen.

I thought of myself as pretty patient, but she trained everyday as if it was the most natural thing in the world. I was doing it for quite some time as well, but didn’t people need a break from time to time?

“?”

Ellen, who was stretching in the lobby in preparation for her early morning training, tilted her head. Of course, there were many people in Royal Class besides us who would do some early morning training, but the majority of students weren’t here, and there were only a few around as it was still vacation time.

Ellen was one of those few people who were exercising every morning.

“Don’t you have anything you like to do on your days off? Is it working out? I hit the nail on the head, didn’t I?.”

“Which nails?”

I frowned at her counter question that had almost nothing to do with what I was asking.

“You know what I mean.”

“If you want to do it, follow me, otherwise don’t.”

Ellen started running as if she wasn’t going to take part in this useless conversation, so I just followed Ellen.

“Hey!”

Originally, I did my early morning training with Adriana, but that church sister had returned to the monastery of the Saint-Owan Principality. She’d probably be back sometime this evening. Hence why I followed behind Ellen right now.

Actually, I was just testing myself to see if I could keep up with that girl’s pace. I made myself believe that I was a monster with insane stamina, activating my supernatural power.

I certainly wouldn’t have been able to keep up with her if it was a few months back, but we weren’t sprinting, so I was able to run alongside her for quite some time. My physical strength had improved quite a lot, and it had improved even more thanks to my supernatural ability.

That was some remarkable growth.

“Guys! Good luck today as well!”

-Whoosh!

Then Ludwig passed by me and Ellen in a flash.

I knew that he wasn’t trying to tease us, I knew better than anyone else that he was just a guy full of energy. You couldn’t find anyone as genuine as him in either of the

classes!

"……Isn't that guy a bit too bubbly?"

……It was bitter. I knew that he didn't mean anything by this, but it still felt uncomfortable.

The writer was talking behind his main character's back. What kind of situation was this? The character I set up was the generic protagonist type: Kind, brave and unable to ignore injustice. What's more, he was right in front of me.

"……A little."

I clearly heard Ellen mutter this as softly as she could.

Right? I wasn't the weird one, right?

CHAPTER 73

‘Quite frankly, I believe that we should play around just for today. It’s the last day of our vacation, you know? Even if you’re finished growing, you’ll end up losing hair with each passing day if you keep this up, you know? Do you know how scary that is?’

‘Losing hair?’

‘Yeah, man. If you exercise too hard they will fall off. Your hair roots are more important than your life. Just go along with me before you end up regretting it.’

‘Are you losing hair?’

‘No, I’m not! Absolutely not! Never in my life I shall suffer from that! This is called preemptive measures! You’ll thank me later on.’

After our Sunday morning training, I dragged Ellen out to Main Street. It didn’t seem like she believed my talk about losing hair and all that. It just felt like she simply gave up.

Still, in the past, she wouldn’t let me grab her like this and would’ve just flat out rejected me, but seeing her reluctantly following me, I felt like we got a little closer.

Anyway, people needed a change of scenery from time to time.

No matter how I looked at it, I was much worse than Baron Ashura.

Looking back on the week, I caused a terrorist incident in the Capital and just a few days after I was whining to my classmate in Temple that I wanted to go out to play on the weekend.

Just what am I doing?

“What do you want to eat? My treat.”

Since we had skipped our lunch at Temple, we decided to go eat something first. We

were forbidden from going out of Temple, so we could only move in the proximity of it.

“Not Choenggukjang.”

Ellen answered right away, because she knew, if she didn’t say anything, I’d drag her to eat that hellish thing again.

No, did she hate it that much?

“I thought you liked choenggukgang though?”

“I only ate it because it was in front of me.”

“How shocking…”

It looked like she didn’t actually like it. How strange. I could have sworn that she did. Of course, that might also be, because she hadn’t eaten it enough yet.

Sheesh.

It seemed like it would still take some time to turn this girl into an enthusiast.

“Then, do you mean to say that anything would be fine if it isn’t choenggukjang?”

“I don’t like eating weird things.”

Ellen cut me off again while looking straight at me.

On Tuesday, I took swordsmanship classes along with Ellen, so we tended to have lunch together. So, every time she made me recommend something, I’d pick something strange, causing her to go through some hardships while eating.

A typical example would be durian. I didn’t know why, but they had it here. After eating a bit of it, Ellen dumped it on the street, which was unlike her.

Then she held onto a wall and slapped it.

“Why, these are all important experiences.”

There should be some stinky tofu around here, so I really wanted to feed it to her.

“No. You only like weird things.”

It wasn’t that I especially liked eating weird things, I just enjoyed watching your reaction while eating these things.

Seriously, if I were to eat this stuff continuously, I think I would get nauseous.

“I just want to eat some meat.”

In the end, Ellen decided that she couldn’t leave this to me, so she chose what she wanted to eat.

“Yeah, you’ve finally managed to get over your problem of deciding for yourself for once.”

I acted as if I was actually trying to teach her a lesson on making choices for herself. Ellen eventually took the lead without acknowledging my words, probably thinking they were nonsense.

* * *

“I’m satisfied.”

“Then eat more… No, no. You can’t.”

When I reflexively told Ellen to eat more 400-gram sirloin steak, I quickly denied it again. If she ate any more, I feared that my pocket money would run out.

“Eating more than ten plates is seriously crossing the line.”

This store was one with a fairly high price range among the stores on Main Street. Even if we got quite a decent amount of pocket money, to feed that girl you would have to be ready to rob a bank or something.

Ellen seemed mildly sullen. Of course, she seemed the same in other people’s eyes though.

In fact, she was actually surprisingly easy to read.

“Ah, fine! But just one more!”

“Then, a Porterhouse Steak.”

“…There sure are a variety of dishes.”

It was a mistake to invite her to eat out.

* * *

“Going by the consensus, dessert is on you. That’s an unwritten rule.”

“Okay.”

Ellen, who absolutely destroyed those steaks I bought for her so that she wouldn’t get grumpy, nodded gently at my words as we were on our way to get dessert. On Main Street, there were not only restaurants but also cafes and various entertainment facilities.

Even though I set it up like this, I never described what kind of stores there were in detail, except a select few. There were a lot of them though.

-Klang!

And for some reason there were some places from which I could hear sounds one would expect coming from batting grounds. No, were they actually batting grounds? What did they replace the pitching machine with?

Was it maybe a type of pitching machine that ran on magic stones, the explanation for everything? Ah, well, then it would be understandable enough.

It wasn’t just that.

-Pang!

At first I wondered what that sound was, but it actually came from bows.

-Bullseye!

It seemed like shooting games except that they used bows instead of guns. There also

seemed to be some that used darts. Ah, just what was the difference between these stores and the ones in modern times? I guess it ended up like this because of my lack of imagination.

Ah, this was all on me.

Every time I remembered that I was stuck in a world of the bizarre modern Fantasy medieval times genre, I felt a tingling in the back of my head.

“I don’t think we’ll find any here.”

“You’re probably right.”

We were looking for a dessert shop, not for an entertainment facility. As I was about to retrace my steps, I heard a voice that seemed somewhat familiar.

-N, no! Ah. That’s not right! Why!

One could hear a hoarse voice of someone very angry coming from a nearby store. I could only see her back, so I wasn’t exactly sure what she was doing, but she seemed to be struggling to pull back a bowstring, shaking pretty badly.

-Peck!

“Ah! I missed!”

It wasn’t all that easy to pull back a bowstring without properly knowing how to use a bow. This just seemed like she was wasting her money.

When I got closer and saw her face, I immediately felt like I knew her.

“Hey, senior.”

“U, urgh!”

The little girl was startled when someone suddenly called out to her, immediately missing her target.

“What are you doing here?”

“Y, you… You?”

It was Redina, a small senior I had some history with.

“Did you come here to play all on your own? What about your older brothers and sisters?”

She seemed to be wandering around all alone. If someone were with her, they wouldn’t have let this little girl struggle with this bow like that. It really seemed quite pitiful. At my words, Redina exclaimed.

“They aren’t my older siblings, they are my friends!”

“Ah, why are you shouting like that?”

Anyway, I felt sorry towards her for various things. Adriana told me that she was actually a very soft hearted person and that she was really worried about me getting hurt during that duel.

I really wanted to apologize to her, but I just didn’t get the chance to do that up until now. I never imagined I’d meet her in a place like this.

When I got closer to find out what she was doing, she seemed to be at a shooting game that seemed more like an archery range than anything. Simply put, to get a price one had to gather points by hitting targets. That part was the same.

However, the targets were pretty far away, so I thought that that little kid would not be able to hit these. Maybe after 2 years.

“…No, I mean, you knew this was going to happen, so why did you get mad?”

“What!”

She knew that she wasn’t able to do this, but this girl still clenched her teeth. However, the owner who let her do it without blinking an eye also seemed rather problematic.

Looking at the prices, they all seemed to be dolls. What was up with this?

“I don’t care what you say, so don’t bother me and go away.”

Redina pushed me away, telling me to not annoy her.

“Although I don’t know what you actually want, I could try helping you out, you know?”

“Huh?”

Hearing these words, Redina’s expression changed slightly.

“I mean, I’m sorry for what I did last time. Honestly, I also heard a lot about you from Adriana. I tried to apologize to you, but I hadn’t gotten a chance to do that yet. So, to apologize for what I said to you, I want to help you out.”

“……Are you good at archery?”

I wasn’t all that good, but I was confident that I was more skilled than her. Reidna sighed and handed me the bow.

“Which one do you want?”

“That one.”

Redina was pointing towards a bear-shaped stuffed toy. When I asked her what prize she was aiming for she immediately pointed to it, like a real child.

Anyway, it was pretty big, but…

……It was the 1st prize.

“Ah. Well.”

I bought a ticket and pulled the bowstring.

I am an archery genius.

-Peng!

Of course, it didn’t go like I wanted it to.

* * *

One had to shoot 10 arrows and hit the 100-point target 10 times to get the maximum points of 1000. So, what Redina was aiming for was an item that could only be obtained with said maximum score.

"……"

"……"

"…How are you different from me?"

I scored 120 points in total for which one could only get the most basic prize. It wasn't much different from 0 points. Redina couldn't pull the bowstring properly. At least I knew how to do that, but the score was just too high a hurdle.

If I didn't have my ability, I wouldn't even have hit any of the targets. This was my first time ever using a bow, so I'd like to think that just hitting some targets was a great accomplishment.

"Ehem! Well… Seems like it didn't go so well, huh?"

"What? Were you showing off?"

Redina held an attitude as if she were better than me, saying I was just showing off.

"This was just the warm up, I'll get serious now, okay?"

I bought a ticket from the owner again.

"I said I'd get it for you, but I never said I'd be the one to shoot."

I never thought I'd be able to get enough points for the 1st place price to begin with, no matter how many times I tried.

"Hey. Show it to us."

"?"

I boldly passed the bow over to Ellen.

* * *

-Puk!

"……Wow."

Redina opened her eyes wide, staring blankly at the tenth arrow to hit the 100-point target.

"……Woah."

I had a similar reaction.

"……Huh."

Even the boss was perplexed.

She only sloppily looked at the targets and lightly pulled the bowstring a few times, but every time she let go, the arrow would always strike the 100-point-target without fail.

"Have you used a bow before?"

"Not that much."

Her talent included the mastery of all weapons. How could she just say that she didn't use a bow that often while getting a perfect score here? Wasn't this just a scam? The targets weren't even that close.

The boss handed Ellen a large teddy bear, which was the first place prize, while looking slightly disheartened.

"Hey, student. Pros shouldn't do something like this. I'll give you the first place prize this time, but there won't be a next time, understood?"

"……Yes."

I could understand the boss' remark, because if someone with an archery talent would come here every day, that would ruin this stand. Of course, Ellen didn't actually have an archery talent.

Ellen took the teddy bear that was almost as big as herself and stood there. Redina

was staring at the teddy bear and Ellen who was holding it. She seemed extremely envious.

Ellen silently handed the large teddy bear to Redina.

“H, huh? You’re giving it to me?”

“I don’t need it.”

“W, woah! Thank you! You’re a good kid!”

Ellen was respectful to Redina, as she was still our senior. Redina seemed very moved, holding that teddy bear larger than her own body. She had to waddle around to carry it, but she seemed delighted.

“Hey, I was the one who paid for this, so shouldn’t you pay me back?”

“……Right.”

Redina looked at me with something close to contempt. She seemed ready to throw the toy away because of my arrogant words.

“You have all sorts of problems, but the biggest problem about you is that you don’t know when to shut up.”

“That’s my biggest problem? Only that? Well, thank you for that compliment.”

Redina was happy that she finally received this gift, but her face turned red again as I teased her a bit. Only for a moment though.

Redina looked at Ellen with twinkling eyes.

“That! Hey, junior, aren’t you good at that as well?”

“?”

What Redina was pointing at was a dart stand on the other side. I didn’t know what the first price was, but it probably was something similar to this stuffed toy. Ellen nodded her head slightly as if she had no other choice.

No, these brats.

“Now, how are you going to carry another teddy bear of that size?”

“Tha, that’s…”

Just holding one of them made her look extremely pathetic, but if she added one more, how was she supposed to get them back to her dormitory room? Of course, I could carry it for her, but that would be rather annoying.

“Never mind that, let’s go get some sweets.”

“Oh! My stuffed toy!”

I grabbed the teddy bear Redina was holding and tied it to her side.

* * *

We sat down at a nearby cafe. We each chose a drink and a dessert. The table was filled with sweets, from cakes to macarons to ice cream.

Ellen was originally supposed to treat me, but I decided to pay, because Redina was now with us.

I ordered black tea.

Redina trembled after eating a little cake. Ellen didn’t really react much, but as always, she diligently began to devour everything.

I didn’t really touch the desserts, only sipping on my black tea. Redina looked at me as if I did something weird.

“Do you like that?”

“Well, it’s so-so.”

I didn’t know much about the taste of tea, but I still ordered some black tea. They also had coffee, but I didn’t want to drink that. Redina opened her mouth slightly, tasting a bit of the tea, saying it didn’t taste good at all.

“If that tea is just so-so, why aren’t you eating anything?”

“Black tea is fine, but I really don’t like sweets.”

I hated sweets, but I was fine with black tea, hence I only ordered black tea. Redina looked at me as if I was some weird animal.

“If you don’t like sweets, why did you come to this place for desserts?”

“I’m treating you two. You seem to really like these sweet things after all.”

Redina narrowed her eyes a bit. She seemed to be a little touched by the fact that I bought them what they liked even though I absolutely hated sweets.

“I don’t really like sweet things either.”

I snorted at Ellen’s words.

“Welp, even if you don’t really like sweet things, it wouldn’t matter to you anyway. You just love eating too much.”

“……”

“What? Can’t refute because I’m right?”

Although she didn’t like sweets all that much, she ate the most out of all of us. Redina was also eating some with little bites, but she could only stare blankly at Ellen who was eating without resting.

“Junior. You’ll gain a lot of weight like that.”

Ellen responded plainly to Redina’s slightly worried comment…

“I won’t.”

At this answer that would make anyone angry, Redina stared at her with a firm expression on her face.

Is it because she was still young?

She seemed like she was thinking something like that.

“I have no idea what kind of constitution she has, but she’s a crazy person that does nothing but work out all day, so she wouldn’t gain any weight.”

“Aah… She has a combat talent. I thought so. And why do you keep pushing back… No. Never mind.”

Redina shook her head as if she had to admit that she wouldn’t get a straight answer out of me.

“I just wanted to say I’m sorry.”

When she brought up the main point, Redina sighed as if she was about to bow.

“It’s okay. I won the duel anyway, so what’s there to apologize?”

After I won that ridiculous duel I already put everything past me, and Redina also didn’t seem to want an apology. Then she started to laugh bashfully.

“Honestly, I don’t like you either, but I like him even less.”

Mayarton, the one who dueled with me, certainly didn’t seem to have a good reputation. So it seemed that Redina was extremely exhilarated at my victory.

“Was he that bad?”

“It was that senior who forced me to go educate you guys. I don’t even want to say anything more about him. I really don’t.”

He forced Redina, who was soft hearted and the youngest because she skipped a few grades, to go discipline her juniors.

No, I was told that she wasn’t able to even utter a single bad word to anyone, but she asked me if I was a pervert or something with great ease. Wasn’t that too much?

Of course, I couldn’t complain, because I did do some pretty dirty things.

“By the way, how old are you?”

“Me? I’m 15.”

Of course, there was a huge age gap between her and her classmates as she skipped a few grades, but she was even 2 years younger than her juniors.

She was 15.

I’m living among these children.

I once again realized that I was living among children a lot younger than my previous self.

“What’s your major?“

“Oh… You don’t know?”

“I would know if you told me before.”

Just what the heck made it possible for her to skip 3 grades?

“My major is magic.”

Her major was magic. Saying that, Redina held out her hand.

And then, a small flame rose from her palm. Suddenly, the flame jumped from her hand with no further warning.

“……You have a supernatural power, don’t you?”

Like Pyrokinesis?

“No. It’s magic.”

-Crackle! Crackle!

The small flame disappeared making way for small sparks splashing from her palms. Ellen was also staring blankly at Redina’s palm.

“What is… this?”

Without any warning, flames and electric sparks rose from her palms, and this time, she lifted the spoon in front of her without touching it.

What was that? Multiple supernatural powers? Was there something like that?

“This is all magic, as I said.”

Redina smiled as she took the spoon out of the air, scooped up a bit of her cake with it and put it in her mouth.

A magic-related talent.

“They say it’s called No casting.”

It was then that I realized why it seemed like she was using multiple supernatural powers at once.

She didn’t cast to use that magic. Of course, this was only the lowest level of magic, and any high ranking wizard could activate such spells without casting, but she would be able to even use highest level magic without casting later on.

What’s with that? I never set up something like that.

“I’m A-1 of the second grade.”

Adriana, who had a tremendous talent for divine powers and had excellent physical skills, was only Number 2.

The one who was deemed to have even more talent than her among the second years was none other than this child in front of us.

CHAPTER 74

Skipping grades was basically only possible for those smart ones. So, I could guess that she held a magic-related talent. Her ability to use magic immediately without having to cast was certainly a praiseworthy one.

She had to have a high level of intelligence to be able to understand magic and hold a talent related to magic control to begin with, so her talent to immediately use magic was probably her most outstanding talent, not the only one.

She was someone worthy of the number 1 spot.

“It is a magic-related talent, but it seems similar to a supernatural power. I’m not completely sure about the details. It’s both a support ability as well as a magic-related talent.”

At Redina’s words, I and Ellen nodded our heads. There was no law that a supernatural power related to magic couldn’t exist after all. Of course, it was quite surprising that she had a supernatural ability I had never set up though.

……I mean, supernatural abilities would randomly appear in this world from time to time, so there was no real need for me to actually set up a limited few, so it wasn’t all that strange that an extra had an ability I had no idea about.

Still, this ability “no casting” was actually a pretty powerful one in practice. Depending on how she grew, she had the potential to become someone hella strong.

Redina sighed as she ate her ice cream.

“But what use has it? If I don’t get a larger magic pool, it wouldn’t even matter.”

If one’s magic power wasn’t able to support such a fraudulent ability, it was worth even less than a pebble on the streets.

Magic was the most convenient and powerful ability to have. Right now, there were only very few thing the high-ranked wizard Eleris couldn’t do, that included teleportation, camouflage and offence. Wizards were almost omnipotent.

So there were a lot of conditions.

The basic condition to become a wizard was being smart, having an enormous amount of magical power, also having a talent for controlling mana and one must have a talent for one of the corresponding fields of magic.

These were, of course, the conditions to become a success. If even one of these aspects were less developed it would be hard for one to actually succeed.

The best example of the importance of the size of one's magic pool was Eleris. She had so much magical power that she could cast Mass Teleport in succession. If I used the Flame of Tuesday, which she returned to me, I'd also be able to use "No casting" to summon flames. However, I could only use it as long as I have magical power left.

Redina seemed to have a strong talent for magic and she also seemed smart enough to easily skip grades, but it looked like her magic pool was quite small.

Even if she knew how to use magic, if she didn't have enough mana, she wouldn't be able to use her knowledge.

"It'll grow larger with time. You're still young."

She was only 15 years old. Why was she already whining about having a small mana pool?

"That's what everyone says…"

Redina sighed as if she didn't know what to do. Saying that while eating those macaron only made her seem cute though.

What if a 15 year old kid had that much power in their hands? Looking at the lengths I have to go, I felt slightly ridiculous.

"Want me to tell you about who's much worse off then you? It'll make you feel better about yourself, you know?"

"Huh? What? Why would that make anyone feel better?"

She looked at me and shook her head as if she had no idea why I suddenly told her that this would make her feel better.

“We’re just normal people, you know? Hearing others being worse off than oneself makes one feel good about oneself. I’m not that well off either, see? That’s how it is.”

It was a similar concept to what one would call catharsis.

“……If that makes you feel good, then you’re a garbage person.”

“No, I mean people are generally like that, you know?”

I’m someone who grew up being taught to always look at those worse off than myself and think „Ah, I’m still better than them“. They’d tell us things like: „There are countries where kids can’t even go to school! You’re better off than them, right? Huh? So be thankful and don’t complain! Got it?”.

“In this world, there are people who have a gigantic mana pool, but lack an aptitude for using it.”

“Wha, what?!”

When she heard my words, Redina’s face turned pale and she even lost grip on the macaron she was holding.

“How could someone born with a huge amount of magical power be bad at controlling it? You’re lying! There can’t be someone like that!”

It certainly sounded absurd. It was like telling someone that there was someone born with a huge amount of strong muscles, but they weren’t able to make use of them because they didn’t have tendons. Redina frowned, scolding me not to lie.

“He’s talking about Cayer Vioden from our class.”

I didn’t answer her, but Ellen, who kept silent up until then.

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

It sure was surprising that Ellen answered in my stead when she kept quiet all this time, but it was even more surprising that she remembered the information about Cayer’s talent.

“Did you memorize his info?”

“……You told me before.”

Ah.

On my first day in Temple, she heard me say that Cayer had huge amounts of magical power but was unable to control it properly. It seemed like she remembered that.

When Redina heard about Cayer’s circumstanced of being cursed with having a lot of magical power but no way to use it, she was speechless for some time.

That was the truth.

Because Cayer was blessed with a naturally big mana pool he held a tremendous amount of magical power as well as an extreme magical power growth rate, but he wasn’t able to use it because he had no aptitude for magic control. That was why he was in Class A, but ended up as Number 10, that was why he had such flaming hatred for Class B. That was the only way he could bolster his low self-esteem.

He was like a dam without a floodgate.

“Wha… What will happen to him?”

Redina’s face turned as white as a sheet. It seemed that she started to worry about her junior who was bestowed with such a cursed blessing.

“Anyway, senior has it much better, right? How is it? Did your worries fly away after hearing that? Hm? Did you think something like ‘I’m glad that’s not me’?”

“!”

After hearing about someone much worse off, Redina started to worry about Cayer, realizing that her situation wasn’t that bad at least. She must have immediately felt relieved hearing that he was worse off than herself and felt guilty about that.

Redina blankly opened her mouth, her face turning red, then she shouted at me.

“You evil bastard! You’re such a bad guy!”

Seeing me talk trash about my classmates while teasing my senior at the same time, Redina seemed to have had enough.

* * *

It seemed like Redina wandered around Temple on her own, because almost all of her classmates returned home for their vacation. It also looked like she was bored of being on her own as she kept going around with us even after we finished eating the desserts.

“It’s very quiet.”

To Redina, who was always surrounded by people, Temple seemed like a completely unfamiliar place at the moment.

“Must be because of that incident.”

The one I caused, to be precise.

“Huh…”

There were some people going around Main Street, but there were only very few students around.

We were the only ones at that cafe.

“Did the Demon King resurrect to take revenge on us?”

Of course, there were various rumors floating around and everyone had their own interpretation of the situation.

The theory that the Demon King might have resurrected to take revenge on humanity was something not only Redina deemed as a possibility.

“Who knows?”

At my words, Redina looked up at me. Her big eyes were filled with fear. That fear was completely understandable. This case just proved that the Imperial Capital was also within the demon remnants scope.

“What if it’s really like that? Artorius is dead. Who will kill the Demon King now?”

The only Temple students who knew that Ellen was Artorius’ younger sister were me, Bertus and probably Charlotte. So Redina was saying this without any ill intentions. Artorius went beyond just being a representative of humanity and was about to reach the level of a deity.

And this representative who was close to getting deified wasn’t held up to normal human standards. At this stage, they all treated him like some non-human.

Redina was referring to Artorius, the hero of mankind, but Ellen would think of him as her precious brother and family member.

Would Ellen think that they thought of her brother as just a tool to bring down the Demon King? I tried to meet Ellen’s eyes.

I wasn’t exactly sure what kind of emotions were lurking behind those calm eyes, but she certainly didn’t look happy.

I took the teddy bear to my side to balance out the weight.

“Then we should all just perish together.”

“No way!”

Redina continued to babble on about what we should do if the Demon King really resurrected and tried to invade the Empire. Ellen kept completely quiet.

How ironic.

The Demon King was dead.

However, there was still a Demon Prince who didn’t want to become the Demon King.

Artorius was dead.

However, there was that hero’s little sister who didn’t want to become a hero.

It all seemed like I’d end up becoming Charlotte’s enemy eventually.

In any case, I again realized that I was Ellen's enemy as well.

They were two of my closest friends in Temple.

The fact that these two would be the people who'd have the hardest time dealing with my truth suddenly made my heart feel cold.

"Thank you, junior! I'll cherish the Teddy Bear!"

"…Okay."

As we returned to the Royal Class' dormitories, Redina gave Ellen a tight hug, saying that she was grateful for the teddy bear.

-Pat, pat

Of course, she probably imagined this was a senior hugging her junior, but no matter how one looked at it, it looked like she was the one getting hugged. After hugging Ellen, Redina looked at me with a blank gaze.

"Reinhardt, you need to fix that habit of yours to behave so harshly on purpose."

As if she realized once more that I was some outspoken, weird bastard she admonished me.

"I'll try that. In my next life."

"Oh, come on!"

-Bzzzt!

"Ah, that stings!"

Redina eventually snapped and hit me with an electricity spell using her no-casting. Because of that tingling feeling, I jumped.

"Did you just use magic on your junior?"

"What are you talking about, you brat?! You're lucky!"

If Redina was serious she could give me a real shock, She smiled mischievously at me.

“Anyway, thanks to you too. I’ll buy you some desserts some time!”

Then Redina stumbled up the stairs while holding that huge teddy bear.

I actually made someone who couldn’t bear insulting others to attack me with magic.

“Well, looks like I really have a talent for angering those who usually wouldn’t get angry, huh?”

Ellen, Adriana, and Redina too.

I really felt like I was slowly accumulating some kinds of achievements by angering and teasing people. However, I didn’t actually get achievement points for it.

“…Did you only realize that now?”

“What?”

“That’s right.”

Ellen looked at me as if I was crazy.We returned to the first-year Class A dormitory. In the hallway on our way back, Ellen quietly called out to me.

“Reinhardt.”

“What is it?”

“If the Demon King really had resurrected…”

That girl still seemed to think about this. Ellen stopped and looked at me.

“Do you think I absolutely have to take up arms to fight him?”

Redina was whining earlier, but she didn’t think about a situation where she had to fight the Demon King all on her own. However, Ellen seemed to think exactly that.

Redina thought that Artorius absolutely had to fight the Demon King. No doubt.

Other people were also thinking like that.

However, Ellen knew that she was much more capable than Artorius.

So, if the Demon King were to resurrect and war would break out again…

If it was known that Ellen was Artorius' sister…

People would obviously think that Ellen had to fight the Demon King as well. They would think that there was no one else who could fight him other than her.

Of course, she wasn't quite ready yet, but I firmly believed that Ellen would end up defeating the Demon King someday.

Ellen had no intention of risking her life for the world. However, she knew she would be forced to do so. That was why she asked me if I thought the same as Redina.

In a way, Ellen's question was quite arrogant. She was convinced that she was more than capable of defeating the Demon King after all. Of course, because it was the truth it couldn't be called arrogant or overconfident.

"I wouldn't want you to do that."

"Why?"

Ellen seemed curious about my reason.

"If you were gone, I'd have to eat all alone."

"……I'm serious."

Ellen slightly furrowed her eyebrows, as if she had no patience for my bullshit.

"I'm serious, too."

"……"

I sighed and looked at the scenery stretching out before Temple, the sun almost set. My arms were crossed.

“I’m not planning on eating with you for the rest of my life, but I don’t want to spend the rest of my life not being able to share a meal with you.”

I didn’t want her to die.

That was what I meant to say. Ellen was facing me with her back to the setting sun. I couldn’t see what kind of expression she was making, because of that.

“So you mean to say that you don’t want me to die because of your own needs?”

“There are plenty of people that demand others to die for them, so can’t there also be people who ask others not to die for their sake?”

I couldn’t see Ellen’s expression clearly.

Perhaps she was smiling.

“Also, please think about the poor Demon King that has to fight you.”

“……You overestimate me.”

“No, I’m pretty damn sure that you’d beat the crap out of him.”

I mean, wasn’t that already happening?

The Reinhardt she was kicking around every day was actually the next Demon King after all!

CHAPTER 75

Since the festival was cancelled, all other official schedules must have been canceled as well. So Charlotte and Bertus, who returned to Temple on Monday, didn't look particularly exhausted.

Monday, the day our normal school life started again.

The atmosphere around the entire Temple seemed to be very much subdued. It wasn't just the Royal Class that was like that, but the expressions of those passing by us seemed sullen and tense as well.

The mood around Temple was so low that it practically hit the ground. Until yesterday there weren't any people around, so now it was more than obvious.

The pressure sure was heavy.

And the places in Temple that were the most subdued and depressed were probably none other than the first year Class A and B of the Royal Class.

"All of you must be aware that the security of Temple is equivalent to that of the Imperial Castle. As long as you do not go out of Temple recklessly, your safety is definitely guaranteed."

Mr. Epinhauser was delivering us this message.

"However, Temple is fully aware about the concerns your parents might hold because of the incident that took place in the Imperial Capital. We shall put your security first. However, if you believe it to be too dangerous here, I would ask you to apply for a leave of absence."

Since almost all the children here were part of some influential family, there was a possibility that the Emperor deemed it too dangerous to keep them here and sent them home. That was why Temple offered them to take a leave of absence during this semester, which was highly unusual. However, unprecedented situations required unprecedented measures.

Wait, wasn't that another vacation, essentially?

"Teacher."

"What is it, Number 4?"

Harriet de Saint-Owan suddenly raised her hand.

"What happens if I take a leave of absence? Can I just come back next semester?"

"No, if you take a leave of absence now, you have to repeat the semester. We cannot allow students who have not yet taken all the common classes of the first semester to take the common classes of the second semester."

He basically said that he'd allow us to take a leave of absence, but we had to be aware that we had to repeat the semester. Even though we individually took courses with other professors, common classes were held on Mondays and Thursdays. If one could just skip a semester by taking a leave of absence and immediately get into the second semester, they would have allowed us to just attend one semester a year then.

I never actually introduced that leave of absence system properly, to begin with. It was like the system one had in college, but not really.

However, now an unprecedented terrorist attack had occurred, so settings that I never even set up started to pop out here and there. The system of being allowed to take a leave of absence if one had to, only got implemented after graduating from Higher Education. Basically in graduate school. Now, they did allow it even in the Higher Education Department, although there was a price to pay for it.

Seeing the future get tangled up like this in real time made my brain freeze over.

Anyway, if one took a leave of absence it was guaranteed that one would be left behind. They were forced to repeat a year. There was no one who'd actually want to repeat a year, but if it were judged to be too dangerous here, there was nothing that could be done about it.

In other words, those who took a leave of absence would drop out from this class.

Each member of this class was part of the main story, and if even one of them left, the

story would definitely deviate from what I knew. Although it already got twisted beyond recognition, I wouldn't want it to get twisted even further.

Right now it was just a slice-of-life story, but all of them would play important parts in the future, so what would happen if one of them just disappeared for a year?

I was in quite the pickle.

Moreover, it was Harriet who asked this.

"Number 4, do you want to take a leave of absence?"

"Ah, that's."

Harriet seemed to take in her surroundings, then nearly burst into tears.

"My parents said it was too dangerous…"

Number A-4. Harriet de Saint-Owan, someone with a magic related talent.

Someone I teased regularly because she was quite innocent and cute.

She was the youngest and most beloved daughter of the Saint-Owan family. So it was quite plausible for them to get their daughter out of this dangerous city, even if she had to repeat a year.

"Follow me after this class."

"Yes…"

"Teacher, I would like to receive some counseling as well."

"Number 3, same goes for you."

"Yes."

Not only Harriet, but even Liana de Grantz, a girl with electrokinetic powers who usually stayed silent, raised her hand.

If this were to go on, this unprecedented situation of having two people less in class

might actually occur.

Damn it.

My karma was flowing back to me in real time.

This karma called Butterfly effect.

“And Number 11.”

“……Yes?”

While a lot of complicated thoughts were going through my head, Mr. Epinhauser called out to me. Most of the gazes landing on me all seemed to say the same thing. ‘What did you do this time?’

No, why was I getting treated like someone who’d always create some sort of trouble?

“You were given 1 merit point. You’ll understand even if I don’t tell you why, right?”

“Huh. Ah. Yes.”

Then I remembered that the nurse teacher told me that I’d get 1 merit point for saving Ellen.

Everyone was astonished that this troublemaker actually received a merit point.

* * *

Even if they had to repeat a year, their parents wouldn’t allow their children to encounter any danger, but those guys were part of the main story in the end. Of course, this wouldn’t matter so much if this story would only end with the peaceful Temple life section, but after the gates open, each one of them was an important, powerful player.

Each one of them had their own sequence in which they grow and become stronger, but it was impossible to predict what would happen if they were to leave this class. They seemed like surplus fighting power, but each one of them had their place.

While I was thinking what to do, Harriet and Liana, who seemed to have gone to counseling, silently took the classes.

Regardless of whether those two decided to take that leave of absence or not, the atmosphere in the classroom was similar to all of us standing on a thin sheet of ice over a lake.

It seemed like most of my classmates were wondering why I received a merit point, but that wasn't the reason.

"So, if we substitute this formula like this…"

I could even notice that the teacher was all flustered. The teachers should have educated a lot of precious children of noble families, but now they were acutely aware of a certain thing.

It was Bertus' gaze.

Last week, there had been a terrorist attack on the Imperial Capital, and demons were suspected to be the perpetrators. As a result, all festival activities in the Capital were cancelled and the honor and prestige of the Imperial Family as well as the Empire fell to the ground.

There probably were rumors that their Victory in the Demon World War was actually a lie.

Therefore, it was clear that Bertus was under a lot of pressure, so no one was willing to enter the Prince's line of sight. That was how uncomfortable they felt.

I was in the last row, so I couldn't see what Bertus, who sat in the front row, looked like. However, everyone was just listening to the class in silence as if they were walking on very thin ice.

Likewise, the teacher showed his desire to end this class quickly by only diligently going by the book.

* * *

Our Lunch break went on for an hour.

And even then it still felt like everyone was walking on very thin ice. It was an incredibly bizarre view.

It was true that the atmosphere of the Imperial Capital was quite bad, but even inside of Temple it wasn't any better. However, at lunchtime, when all grades were in the same room eating together, it was downright chilly. Only the sound of the tableware moving quietly could be heard. No one was talking loudly.

Of course, Bertus was here, but there was also Charlotte.

Although they were only first years, but because they were the Prince and Princess, who obviously were in a very bad mood, even the seniors only ate quietly. It could be felt once again that they had quite the big presence even if they did nothing special in the Royal Class.

However, there were some people who had no awareness at all.

-Munch, munch

Ellen Artorius, who just started eating together with me at some point, was someone like that.

Of course, she was normally the silent type, so it wasn't really all that noticeable that she didn't care. She would just eat, get seconds, and eat some more.

But she seemed to be a little noisier than usual.

There were about a hundred people sitting in this dining hall, so it felt really creepy just hearing the sound of tableware.

Neither Bertus nor Charlotte looked particularly sullen, however, they didn't look particularly happy either. They were quietly eating. None of those two spoke even a single word.

I couldn't take this either. To be honest, I was quite conscious of these young kids as well.

How pathetic is that, someone in their 30s being so conscious of 17-year-old kids?

"Just looking around, there's no one as thick-skinned as you."

"?"

Ellen was pretty eager to eat without answering back to me.

And in this silence, numerous eyes now moved towards me, who opened his mouth.

No, I'm just speaking with my own mouth. What's wrong with that?

* * *

I was now on a level on which I could somewhat follow the PE class. Of course, I still couldn't be compared with those stamina monsters though.

Perhaps thanks to my steady training, I felt like my physical strength improved tremendously compared to those majoring in magic or other non-combat classes.

"Reinhardt, don't use your supernatural power. This is a warning."

Just when I thought I was doing the exercises quite well, the PE teacher called me over. He seemed to think that this sudden jump in strength was only possible if I cheated with my supernatural power.

"I didn't use it though?"

"I've heard that you can physically strengthen yourself with your supernatural power. Isn't that the case?"

"That's right, but… I didn't use it just now."

That was the truth, okay?

Of course, when I was sparing with Ellen or training on my own, I kept using it to get used to activating it in real life situations. However, during class, I deliberately did not use it because I was afraid I'd get to hear exactly what I was told just now.

The teacher furrowed his brows at my plea.

"…Someone who wasn't even able to run properly just recently had his stamina improved to such a degree? Tell me, who'd believe that?"

Even if we had different teachers for each subject, all of them were aware of the kids' profiles. So even this teacher was aware of the fact that I awakened a supernatural power.

This person who was just barely able to kind of run had a sudden jump in stamina, so it seemed like he was convinced that I was using my supernatural power.

"No, but I'm really not using it though?"

However, it was almost impossible to really prove whether I used it or not. The teacher's expression wrinkled at my protesting remarks. The atmosphere of the training grounds grew chilly.

Everyone was watching me and the teacher while they continued to run.

"Are you protesting right now?"

The PE teacher was even able to thoroughly torture the precious children of noblemen like this, so he was quite the stubborn and rough person. If one didn't have that kind of courage, one wouldn't be able to make those noble children roll down in the mud.

However, when I suddenly confronted him like this, it seemed like a faucet had been turned open.

"I'm simply stating the truth, so this can't be categorized as protesting. I didn't use my supernatural power."

I'm telling you, I didn't do it, so that's the truth, alright?

The teacher was opening his eyes wide and was about to say something.

"Te, teacher!"

"……What is it, Ludwig?"

Ludwig, who was running a bit further away, called out to the PE teacher.

"Reinhardt had been waking up very early every morning and exercised from dawn for some time now! I've seen him do it!"

Ludwig didn't even ask if I actually needed help and immediately jumped in to defend me. He was basically saying: "Reinhardt is training a lot in the morning, so it was only natural for his strength to improve".

Wow, come here, you. Ain't that just touching, Ludwig? As expected of my main character!

After hearing Ludwig's words, the PE teacher looked down at me.

"Is that true?"

"Yeah, I've seen him train alone and with Ellen several times."

Ellen, who was running at the same tempo no matter what was happening around her, nodded slowly when she noticed the PE teacher looking at her.

"Oh, so you were trying hard, huh. Reinhardt, sorry for the misunderstanding."

The PE teacher meekly admitted his mistake. He seemed to have held prejudice against me. He probably saw me as a troublemaker who'd just pick fights here and there.

"Yeah, well… One can't be suspicious enough, I guess?"

There was no reason for me to say anything more, because the misunderstanding got resolved. I could feel the other students concentrating on their stuff while pretending not to see me.

"Good going, Reinhardt!"

"Ah, thanks."

Meeting this guy every time when I did my morning training helped me out in a pretty weird way.

* * *

After that hellish training disguised as PE, the kids, with the exception of a few, were still writhing in the shower, letting out deathly groans.

And before I knew it, I belonged to the side opposite of the death howl faction. At this point, I, Bertus, Ludwig and Cliffman belonged to it.

As soon as they saw my body everyone started to gossip, and even those who didn't start to gossip seemed surprised by my appearance.

When Ludwig saw my body while we were washing up, he winded his eyes in surprise.

"Reinhardt… Why is your body like this?"

"What?"

It wasn't like I was super muscular or something.

"Your whole body is covered in that. What happened?"

It was my whole body being covered with black bruises.

"I sometimes get hit by training swords, fall over or have to roll away to dodge, so I ended up like this."

"At this rate you might get some internal problems. You should really go see a priest."

"Why should I do that?"

These throbbing bruises would disappear when I go rest tonight. When I spar with Ellen, ending up like this was actually quite fortunate.

Actually, there were people who wouldn't go get treatment to get used to this kind of pain, you know?

I might get seriously hurt sometime in the future, but I wouldn't want to end up writhing on the ground crying because of the pain, leaving me incapacitated and unable to do my job.

Everyone seemed to think that I really was some punk when they saw my body in that state.

"Seems like you're really working hard, Reinhardt. Good."

– Tap, tap

Suddenly, Bertus passed by me and tapped my shoulder.

No, you bastard, did you think I'd be happy hearing something like that while we were naked? Everyone seemed to be astonished hearing what Bertus told me.

Those seemingly insignificant words were the first Bertus uttered today.

Wasn't that even worse?

It seemed like he said this without much thought, which made it seem even more mysterious.

* * *

After our PE class, it was time for the closing ceremony. After Mr. Epinhauser finished, the other children began to get ready to go back.

Was it because of the stress caused by having to spend this day in total silence? Everyone rushed out of the classroom as if they were escaping from hell. Among them was No. 9, Erich de Lafaeri, who was the most affected.

And, as always, he seemed to have this deep-seated compulsion to bully Scarlett, who was about to leave her classroom.

As always, seeing Scarlett who was leaving, he hit the back of Scarlett's head as if on instinct. He seemed to have forgotten the chilly atmosphere from before.

"Hey. Cursed Eyes."

-Bang!

"Ack!"

As the sound of the slap to the back of her head reverberated, Scarlett crouched down with a low scream.

"I told you not to stand out."

"……"

He'd always pass her by, leaving some words of contempt like that. It had always been like that, and, as always, everyone just looked the other way, pretending not to see it.

It seemed my words to just close her eyes and give him a good smack weren't effective enough. At this rate, Scarlett would get bullied for a much longer time.

However, something happened today.

Not to Scarlett, but to Erich.

"You, stand still."

A cold voice that made one's blood freeze, called out to Erich who was about to pass by.

"Huh… Huh?"

Not only Erich stopped in his tracks, but all the students that were about to leave halted their steps as well.

It was as if time had stopped for this hallway. Just with a few words from this person, everything came to a halt.

That person only told Erich to stand still, but her voice was so cold that everyone just froze in place.

"I was trying to stand back and watch just how far you would go, but I just can't do that anymore."

"Huh, Wha… What…?"

Someone with a slightly cold gaze stared at Erich and got closer.

Ludwig was the one who was supposed to save Scarlett.

The only person who could change such a predetermined scenario was someone who wasn't part of the main story.

One of them was me.

“Who are you to keep harassing someone under me?”

And the other was Charlotte de Gardias.

“Tha, that… That’s…”

Scarlett came from a humble background, so he messed with her. Even if she was part of Class B, Erich had no intentions of picking a fight with the princess.

“What is it? Tell me.”

“I, I just… She just made me feel bad…”

“From my point of view, you make me feel even worse for hitting my classmate who was just standing there. And for what reason? Because of her eyes and hair?”

Erich was doing what he normally did, but he happened to enrage Charlotte by doing that. Usually, she might have let this go because she didn’t want to attract attention, but Charlotte wasn’t in her usual state at the moment.

Seeing this situation with how she currently was, probably was the straw that broke the camel’s back.

“Hey, what’s the matter? Okay. I’ll talk to him.”

Bertus intervened as the atmosphere was becoming more and more tense. Charlotte glanced at Bertus.

“You’re going to talk to him?”

“Of course, he’s done something horrible, so I’ll make sure he won’t do it again in the future…”

“Okay, please do so. Take care of your people.”

Bertus’ face, who was trying to mediate the situation with a smile, froze at those cold words. Charlotte looked at Bertus and smiled, which was close to a sneer.

“Don’t let your people do anything that would besmirch the Empire’s honor. Do your best.”

After Charlotte said that, she had a grin on her lips.

“Ah, you know I’m talking about Class A, right?”

Class B was hers and Class A was his. It seemed like she was talking about that, but I could read the hidden meaning behind her words.

It was obvious after looking at Bertus’ expression, which had practically hardened.

Bertus was behind the ones who were running the black market.

That was why she said that he should take good care of his people.

It was an insult to Bertus, telling him to manage his powers and information network better. Charlotte turned around, grabbed Scarlett’s hand, making her stand up and left the classroom together with her.

Bertus was stunned for a moment, as if he had never expected to hear such words from her. Of course, it didn’t take that long for him to regain his composure.

“Erich.”

I didn’t know what the exact cause was, but Erich looked extremely pale, maybe because he caused Bertus to be humiliated.

“Ah, ah… · ·.”

“I think you’re quite unlucky. My sister is in a very bad mood today.”

“Ah, uh… Ah. Yes.”

Bertus smiled softly and gently patted him on the shoulder. He looked towards the leaving Charlotte’s back and smiled even more.

“I really hope that those two become good friends.”

I thought I knew what that guy was thinking.

He, rather than feeling insulted, now paid attention to the fact that Charlotte was treating Scarlett as her own.

He knew that just by knowing that someone was important to you was some major information.

So, it seemed like Bertus wanted Charlotte and Scarlett to become closer.

He was one scary guy no matter how one looked at it.

And that Bertus now suddenly turned towards me.

“By the way, Reinhardt, would you like to go back and talk with me for a moment?”

Why me?

CHAPTER 76

After school.

Bertus called me to his room, not the terrace where we usually talked.

Bertus' room wasn't much different from mine. It wasn't more glamorous or anything else one might associate with a room belonging to a prince.

However, for a guy with the talents to become a Sword Master, there were quite a lot of books here. He also had some training equipment, of course, but there were even more completely filled bookshelves in here.

What a hard-working villain. It wasn't all that bad, but it still was scary as I was now seeing yet another side of him.

"Let us drink a cup of tea."

"Ah, what? Sure."

Bertus brewed a cup of tea for me and himself. Rather than getting served by various people, like in the Imperial Palace, Bertus seemed to like doing things on his own.

He didn't show any sort of overwhelming superiority towards anyone. That made him seem like a good person to others.

"So, did you have a good rest during the holidays?"

"No, things were actually more exhausting than usual."

In fact, during that terrorist incident, I felt like my head was about to explode, and after that, I was only focusing on training with Ellen. I worked myself to the extreme.

Rather, it seemed like my days off were cut extremely short. Bertus laughed loudly.

"Looking at your body, it sure seems like it."

He probably reacted like that because he saw the bruises all over my body, not because of the muscles I build up. It seemed that me gritting my teeth and actually training hard left a good impression on Bertus.

If he valued strength, he wouldn't have gone for me, but Ludwig, who would have been the perfect subordinate for Bertus. He was someone who could go up against Ellen in terms of stamina after all.

But why did he call me over? I didn't think he called me here just to have some tea.

"Compared to how you were the first time we had P.E., you sure were remarkable. Still, while training yourself is good, you shouldn't overdo it. You might end up hurting your body. We're still growing after all, right?"

"That's how it should be."

Bertus warned me several times that excessive training wasn't good while one was still in their growing period. I was of the same opinion. I didn't ask him anything. I didn't want to appear too on guard after all.

"Honestly, I only called you over because I was curious about something, nothing more."

"What?"

"How did you and Ellen become friends?"

Wasn't it enough for him to focus on his own situation? Why was he asking me something like this all of a sudden? Bertus shook his head and laughed.

"No, well, I tried talking to her a few times to get closer to her, but no matter what I did she'd always just give me some curt answers… But you actually trained with her. You two talk a lot, right? I wonder if there's a trick behind it."

Obviously, Ellen didn't speak to any other classmate other than me. If they knew about her background there probably would be a lot who'd try to forcefully get close to her, however, Bertus knew.

Ellen's image in class at the moment was that she was extremely talented, but also really blunt so she was a bit hard to approach. It probably was something like that.

“It’s pretty hard to put it into words.”

Come to think of it, It kind of just happened, so I couldn’t really tell him how I got closer to her when he asked.

“Huh… To be honest, I feel like I never actually had the intentions of getting closer to her”

“……You really have no idea.”

“Yeah, I don’t.”

“I see…”

Bertus sighed at my silly reply.

I wasn’t actually that nice to her. Strictly speaking, after I teased and poked at her, we suddenly became like this. Sometimes we would eat together, sometimes we would have some snacks together and sometimes we would walk home together, then we suddenly just became friends.

Of course, even though we did become friends, nothing much had changed.

“Anyway, Reinhardt, aren’t you strangely capable? You’re saying it was an accident more or less, but you did end up getting close to Ellen, who is the hardest to get close to, right?”

And even Bertus, who said that talents at this level were worthless, seemed to severely overestimate Ellen’s ability. Of course, he was probably more focused on her background though.

“I’m asking just in case, but do you like her?”

“……No, not at all.”

We got along, but not like that. Why was Bertus asking me these things all of a sudden? He was staring at me as if he was trying to read my true intentions.

“Hmm… Well. Yeah. What’s strange about you is that you don’t seem to have any interest in any of the girls at all. Didn’t you tease Saint-Owan quite severely?”

Bertus giggled, wondering if I just treated all girls that way.

“I guess I’m not old enough to be interested in them yet.”

“…Aren’t you at the age in which one usually gets really interested in girls though?”

“I don’t believe I am though.”

I spoke as if I wasn’t the one we were talking about. To me, they were just cute little brats. How nice it would have been if they were just a bit older.

“But why are you asking if I like her?”

“Hmm, why indeed?”

Bertus smiled, but didn’t give me an answer. He seemed to have some kind of intention, but I just couldn’t fathom what it was. Well, I didn’t see how this guy would ever tell me anything honestly.

“Well, it’s a bit late, but about this incident.”

As if he didn’t want to talk about this subject anymore he tried to change it.

Still, considering what I knew about his setting, he probably was very interested in Ellen’s power, not in her as a person. This wouldn’t change, even in the future.

So there wasn’t any reason for him to be interested in whether I liked Ellen or not. Why did he ask…?

“So, what do you think about this incident?”

Bertus brought up a topic that was much too large for just a simple subject change.

“……Huh?”

Hence I doubted my ears when I heard him mention it.

“This incident. You heard about it , didn’t you?”

No matter how favorably he looked upon me, why would he ask someone from the

streets for their opinion on something like that? Obviously, because I was someone from the streets, so he might think there weren't any clear boundaries that bound me…

"Erm… I heard about it… I think it wasn't that big a deal though."

I tried to give a very vague answer that an ordinary person would give. The demons caused a terrorist attack in the Imperial Capital. but it wasn't actually that big an incident, right?

Bertus nodded his head slowly while letting out a low hum.

"Is that all?"

Bertus looked at me and asked me again, seeming as if there was an answer he was hoping for me to give. Of course, if I seriously thought about it, I didn't know if I could actually give him a satisfactory answer that was different from the perspective the perpetrator of the case had. It was already dangerous enough for me to comment on this. I might end up talking about things that I shouldn't know after all.

Bertus didn't seem to doubt me though. He wasn't really interrogating me.

However, he did seem to want me to give him an unusual answer.

It felt like he was testing my insight.

Then an answer I could give him appeared in my mind.

"Well… I'm wondering how this could happen just after the Demon World War ended. Why did they do it…? Did they have some sort of conflict with the Knights Templar? Maybe they had a reason that wasn't generally known… Something like that? I'm still in Temple, so I don't really know the details."

That was the thing Ellen once told me. There might have been other reasons that were left unseen. Otherwise, there would be no need for the demons to fight the Knights Templar without any bigger goal.

As if he found my words valid, Bertus nodded his head.

"The cause of this incident, huh?… It's kind of hard to tell you the details, but yeah,

those are valid questions."

Going by the analogy Charlotte used, it seemed that the one's behind the black market were part of Bertus' camp. No matter if Bertus took the initiative in this or not, they eventually tried to open an illegal auction, and information about that was leaked to the demons.

That was why she sarcastically told him to manage his people better. It was the first time in history that there was a terrorist attack in the Imperial Capital, as well as this slaughter of hordes of demons.

But Bertus didn't actually look all too bothered. Assuming that he actually showed how he felt right now.

"As you know, there is no one else in Temple to whom I could talk to normally, except you."

"Ah… Yes."

Someone who knew his true self he could talk to, to some extent. Even though he was part of the Imperial Family, Bertus actually didn't have anyone to really talk to in Temple.

Everyone wasn't that strong yet and Bertus held a gentle image at the moment. He folded his arms and furrowed his eyebrows.

"It's a mess. However, even though everything ended up like this, I'm wondering if this really is such a bad thing."

This was quite the shocking remark for the Imperial Prince to make.

Bertus didn't even bother to warn me that I'd be dead if I told this to anyone. He probably thought, I'd be smart enough to know that I shouldn't spread this around.

But how could this not be a bad thing?

The black market he planned on opening got destroyed, The prestige and honor of the Imperial Family got smeared, and they gave their political opponents a gap to attack, So how was this not a bad thing?

“Why?”

“Do you think the system of a single Empire dominating the entire human continent could have been possible without the demons?”

My eyes twitched at Bertus’ words.

“Without a common enemy, humans wouldn’t be able to unite.”

“……”

“No, shall I put it differently? Humans create enemies so that they can unite. That’s how targets like Scarlett are created.”

Humans needed a common enemy to unite. In order to unite, they deliberately made someone an enemy who wasn’t actually one.

In small groups this would be called bullying.

On a bigger scale, it was the state announcing a country their enemy and inducing the people to unite under one banner.

Humans only united when they had a common enemy. And those who wanted to induce such unity created artificial enemies.

That was what Bertus was talking about.

Examples for that were the Nazis and the Allied Forces, the communists and the capitalists and those other numerous conflicting factions.

In the end, Bertus was saying that this concept wasn’t much different from bullying.

Creating enemies to unite.

“Now that the Demon World War was over, the Empire’s situation would gradually become more unstable. The enemy we as a species faced together is now gone, so now would be the time to sate one’s own greed again.”

The existence of this gigantic adversary called the Demon Realm became a great cause for the humans to unite.

That was how this Empire could exist. It was thanks to no one else but the Demon Realm, but now that the War ended in the humans' victory, they didn't have an enemy left to defeat now. So Bertus was predicting that the Empire would end up divided in the future.

Actually, I once thought about proceeding with such a storyline after I ran out of slice-of-life material.

I was planning on creating a scenario in which the Empire fell apart leading to a War between the different nations.

However, in the end, I decided on that Gate opening thing, not that scenario.

Bertus, of course, didn't know about the Gates yet so he was predicting the most likely scenario to happen with his current knowledge.

Humans who lost their common enemy would end up dividing again, so although the Empire had entered its golden age at the moment, humans would start wars among themselves again because of various reasons.

If the Gates didn't appear, history would certainly flow into that direction.

"But at a time like this, the demons did something like that in the middle of the Imperial Capital."

The power of the Demon Realm, which was thought to have died down completely, led a team to the Imperial Capital.

Therefore, the people's fear of the Demon Realm got reignited, and the Empire would be able to maintain this solidarity just like before as long as this fear existed.

"Fear is very effective for governing a country as well as uniting its people."

Therefore, even though Bertus suffered a considerable loss, and the people were absolutely terrified because of this incident, he evaluated that this event was something necessary for the Empire.

It was true that he took some damage, but Bertus was looking even further ahead. The demons' terrorist attack actually helped maintain the Empire.

In fact, Bertus already knew that the Darklands wouldn't be able to pose a threat to the humans. So, he wasn't bothered about those demons, who were only remnants. They wouldn't be able to destroy the Empire or inflict any significant damage. In the end, their existence was beneficial for the Empire.

I had to agree to a certain extent to Bertus' bold opinion.

Looking at how he was at thinking, it actually seemed like he'd be rather happy to know that a Demon King candidate was still alive. If the existence of an enemy nation helped keep the human's unity, he probably would want the Demon Prince to rebuild his power.

Of course, that was just another reason for me not to reveal my identity. Bertus seemed to try to see if I was able to think so far ahead. Or, maybe he just wanted to see if I agreed to him.

I didn't know what reaction would be good. I also didn't know what Charlotte thought about this matter.

It was quite the strange feeling, seeing the mastermind of it all analyzing this incident.

I wondered if Airi and Eleris were doing well.

That was it.

I had more important things to worry about.

Harriet de Saint-Owan and Liana de Grantz.

I had to somehow stop these two from taking their leave of absence. I wasn't really a close friend to Harriet no matter how one looked at it, and I never even spoke a word with Liana de Grantz.

What should I do? I could say something to Harriet, but in Liana's case, if someone she didn't even talk to usually told her to not take a leave of absence, she probably wouldn't even pretend to listen to me.

* * *

After dinner.

Putting all my worries aside I went to look for Harriet in the dormitories.

And that was where the problem lay.

"……Where did she go?"

She wasn't in the magic lab, not in her private room, not in the lobby and not in the dining room.

Come to think of it, I only knew Ellen's encounter spots. If Harriet wasn't in the dorm, she was somewhere outside…

Fortunately, there was still someone I could ask. Although Harriet wasn't in the magic lab, there was another person.

I went back to the magic lab and opened the door abruptly.

"Hey."

"Hu, huh?"

The girl who answered back seemed slightly frightened.

This person was the only one beside Harriet who majored in magic in Class A. So, they should know each other well.

Number A-7, Adelia.

Her talents were summoning magic and magic crafting.

So her specialty lay in creating things with her magic. Her talent for magic crafting was very crucial.

She could create things like Magic Lanterns on a small scale with her magic crafting, but later on, on a large scale, she'd be able to design things like magic trains.

I had never talked to her, but I thought she was quite scared of me because of the things I did.

“Where did the idiot go?”

“I, idi… Idiot?”

Just me calling Harriet an idiot made her feel terrified.

“Come on. Where did she go? I can’t find her.”

I visibly saw the gears moving in her head. If she told me where Harriet was in this situation, she’d admit that her friend’s nickname was Idiot. Her lips quivered while she quietly mumbled something.

“Fricking hell. Did I do anything to you? I’m just asking you where she is.”

Why was she trying to make me out to be the bad guy here? Honestly, I’ve never kicked someone’s ass who hadn’t tried something with me, okay? Why was she like this?

…When I thought about it, that might actually be useful.

When I went towards her, she nervously shook her head.

“Tha, that’s… She went to the communicator…”

In the end, she had to admit that Harriet’s nickname was Idiot, so her guilt was evident on her face.

“Oh, she’s there?”

Although, the disadvantage of communicators was that the person one wanted to reach needed one as well, there were some places in the Royal Class’ dormitory in which one could use magic devices for communication. I didn’t really have a use for that, but if one’s parents were powerful and rich enough to have such communication tools, one would be able to keep in touch with their parents regularly.

Anyway, it seemed like Harriet was there at the moment.

Adelia kept looking at me as if she wanted me to leave if my business with her was over.

Harriet didn't go that far away, so this probably meant that she'd go back to the dormitory pretty soon. Adelia kept looking at me as if she couldn't do anything else because of my presence.

"Hey, talk with me."

"Hu, huh? Y, you and me?"

"Who else is here besides us?"

Adelia was shaking hard. It seemed like she was about to die of fear.

CHAPTER 77

If the regular encounter spot of the ones with combat talents was the training room, the encounter spot of the ones with magical talents was the magic lab. Although it was possible to set up a research area in one's private rooms, this facility was obviously better equipped.

There were only two people with magical talents in Class A, so both of them used this place regularly. No one else but those two came into this room, so there were a lot of things that seemed like personal items scattered around the place.

No one knew what of these things were actually important, so this place wouldn't get cleaned unless they requested it.

Therefore, this place was a mess.

"You sure party in here quite a bit, huh?"

I had no idea why there were plates that seemed like they were eaten from piled on one side. Why were there clothes scattered everywhere as well? I sat down on a sofa located next to a really messy table.

Adelia also sat down across from me, with her face pale.

"Hey, ask someone to clean up here. Seriously. What's all this? Is it so hard to ask someone, when you don't even try cleaning this shit up yourself?"

"Uhm… okay…"

Looking like a kid being scolded for something, Adelia lowered her head and answered in a teeny tiny voice. I didn't know a lot about these pieces of research equipment, but I was pretty sure this mess wasn't necessary to use them.

"By the way, do you think she'll take a leave of absence?"

"I think so…"

Adelia muttered in a sullen voice. Harriet and Adelia were in the same major, so they probably were pretty close. Harriet originally despised the lower class and had a strong sense of superiority, so she really hated commoners. But Adelia was a commoner. It looked like even Harriet couldn't stand being all alone, so she treated her well as an exception. That was how it ended up.

"What will you do if she quits?"

"I don't know… I wouldn't want her to do that…"

It seemed that Adelia didn't like that Harriet would take a leave of absence from school. As I was in front of her, she kept wiggling her hands and feet like a small animal.

It was true that I was putting her on the spot here, but this was really uncomfortable. It felt like I was harassing her.

Anyway, Adelia hated the idea of Harriet leaving Temple.

"Then wouldn't it be good to try to convince her to stay here?"

It sure would be nice if she did the work for me. At my words, Adelia raised her head and looked at me.

She seemed astonished.

"H, how could I…? Harriet is a very, very powerful noble, how could I ask something like that of her…?"

Since both of them were still part of Temple, Adelia was able to be friendly with Harriet, but she would probably have a hard time communicating with her. The gap of their social status was very large, so Adelia was probably always thinking about what she could and couldn't say to her, or if she was even allowed to be friendly with a girl like Harriet.

"Fricking hell. If you wanna do something, do it. Why do you have to put so much thought into that?"

First of all, students were to follow the principle of equality inside of Temple, meaning their status was not to be mentioned. Of course, there were people like me

who took it literally as is, and there were people like Mayarton, who abused this system, however, there were also a lot of people who couldn't let go of their status.

Most of them were royals and nobles, but there were also a lot of commoners with that problem. Commoners like Adelia. At my words, her eyes shook.

"I, I can't… I'm too scared…"

Adelia didn't seem to understand me, who was casually bullying all the kids.

"Who am I to say something against the Grand Duke of Saint-Owan's decision…?"

She felt like she didn't deserve to say anything about this matter. Rather, she seemed to think that saying something would be rude towards Harriet as well as disrespectful towards her father, the Grand Duke of Saint-Owan.

Woah. That was bringing negative thinking to a new level. Some of the kids in Class A were so self-confident that I could hurl, but someone with such low self-esteem also was a pain in the ass, albeit for slightly different reasons.

"Jeez, someone like you would end up suffering through hardship for her entire life."

"Wh, why are you saying something like that to me…"

Adelia, who seemed quite restless, whined slightly to my harsh words and quickly covered her mouth in surprise. She thought I'd get angry because she talked back to me.

If Harriet was an idiot, then she would be a scaredy-cat.

A cute little scaredy-cat.

Harriet was difficult to deal with for her because she was an aristocrat, and she was afraid of me because I was a bully even though I was a commoner, same as her.

She was someone who was scared easily like that. Adelia's eyes shook slightly again before she asked me in a quiet voice.

"B, but you… You also don't want Harriet to take a leave of absence?"

“Yeah, I don’t.”

Her eyes widened at my simple answer. That reaction had a lot of meaning behind it.

Weren’t you guys on bad terms?

I thought you would like it if Harriet took the semester off.

Did that mean…

Do you like her?

Oh, so that was why you’ve been harrassing Harriet up until now…

Wow.

This was the first time I held a conversation with this kid, but I could read her mind just by looking at her eyes.

And then.

-Katchak

“Adelia? Here you a…”

Harriet opened the bulky door to the magic lab and entered. When she saw me she immediately froze up.

Harriet’s face turned pale as she saw me placed in front of Adelia, talking with her.

“Y, you… W, why. Why… are you here?”

“What? Is there a reason why I shouldn’t be here?”

Was there some sort of rule that only magic majors could enter the magic lab?
Harriet’s face turned even paler, then it suddenly started to grow redder and redder.

She was staring at me and this messy lab alternately.

In fact, there weren’t only dirty plates scattered about, but also various pieces of

clothes.

These guys totally used this shared space as a two-person studio. It probably felt like some guy just entered their room.

She looked like the person she least wanted to see this just randomly strolled in here.

“Get. G, get ooooooooooooooooooout!”

Soon, that girl let out a shout that was close to a scream.

Of course, I wouldn’t get out of here.

No way in hell.

“No, it’s not like you’re paying rent for this place or something, so you can’t just tell me to leave, you know?”

“Get out! Get out! Get out! Hurry and get out!”

She turned so red that one might mistake her for a tomato, then she grabbed my arm and tried to drag me away. Look at that kid, who was so afraid of me even touching her cheeks, grabbing me directly like that.

“Hey man, you’re wearing out my clothes! Do you have any idea how much these cost?”

They were probably really cheap, right?

It wasn’t anything high quality, but they were still the casual clothes Eleris bought for me!

“Getoutgetoutgetoutgetout!”

“Hey, did I curse at you or was I mean? What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Aaaaaaaaaarg! Ag! Arg!”

Harriet, who repeated “Get out” like some broken record, eventually managed to drag me out of the magic lab.

No, I mean, it wasn't like this was something you couldn't show anyone. It's normal for kids to be a little messy, so why were you doing this?

After some time, she slightly opened the door to the magic lab and only poked her head out. The redness on her face indicated that she still felt quite embarrassed.

"What do you want?"

That girl was asking me with such a vigilant look on her face, as if she was asking me what the hell I was doing in her magic lab.

"I was looking for you."

"……Me?"

Somehow, her face managed to become even redder.

* * *

I thought she would shout something like "Why would I even talk to someone like you?!", but after staying quiet for a bit, she quietly came out of the lab.

"Can't we talk inside?"

"No! Only over my dead body!"

Harriet screamed. I wasn't there to steal their research results or something, and I already saw how messy that place was. Nothing would change if I looked at it more than I already did, you know?

Kids are just so…

In the end, I took her to the dining hall. Dinner time was still far away, so there wasn't anyone in the dining hall.

Surprisingly, I didn't have to make her follow me at all. She didn't say much, but she did follow me there quite obediently. We sat down across from each other.

"What is it?"

It was the attitude of someone who graciously decided to listen to whatever bullshit I had to say. She was surprisingly cooperative. Without much further ado, I went straight to the point.

“Are you going to take a leave of absence?”

“……What is it to you? How nice. I don’t have to see your ugly visage for a whole year, you bastard.”

Harriet seemed kind of intimidated. It seemed like she wanted to tell me how nice it would be to live without having to see my face, and that it was none of my business.

“Don’t do it.”

“……Huh?”

“Don’t take a leave of absence.”

Harriet’s face contorted strangely hearing this request that sounded more like a command.

Her face was growing even redder though. Suddenly, steam seemed to rise from her head, she was even fanning herself.

She looked like she hit her face on a wall.

“Huh! H, huh! W, what…? What?! H, hah! Oh. Yeah, what… What?!”

A, aren’t you making it a bit too obvious?

Then she stared at me with her arms folded after she cooled down her face by fanning it with her hands.

“Why should I listen to you?”

No, I only told you not to take a leave of absence. I didn’t say that because I like you or something. Why are you looking at me with such anticipation? If I say it’s because I like you, you’d just go “Hmph! But of course, it is such a great honor to talk to someone as angelic as me after all!”. I could clearly see that she was ready to say these types of things.

“Well… I don’t really know what you’re imagining right now, but wouldn’t this mean that you can only return to school next year if you take a leave of absence?”

“……”

Harriet’s expression hardened when she heard my words.

It seemed like she had an idea what I was talking about. I smiled as I looked at Harriet.

“Then you’d become my junior. Are you fine with that?”

“So, something like that won’t ha, ha, happen! First-graders are just first-graders!”

Hey, she seemed hella worried about that. Even if I always teased her by calling her an idiot, she really wasn’t one.

She must have clearly simulated what would happen after she came back from her one-year absence.

She was obviously shivering in fear of what Reinhardt, who loved to torment her, would do.

“Next year, it will be my turn to educate our cute juniors, you know? Do you think you can afford that?”

“Nonsense! You said you didn’t like this stuff! You said these kinds of traditions were bad!”

So, in the end Harriet got all excited about the stuff I babbled during the duel.

“I don’t really like being on the receiving end of it, but maybe I’ll enjoy being on the other side though?”

Harriet’s mouth gaped wide open as I displayed my crazy hypocrisy.

“You’re the worst! You’re actually crazy!”

“Let’s see, how about 100 push-ups followed by goosesteps, fifty rounds around the training field.”

“Argh!”

Harriet began to tremble and her face turned red again.

Ah.

It was so funny seeing her immediately react to my teasing compared to Ellen, who didn’t have much of a reaction to most things.

“So if you don’t want to be teased to death by me as your senior, wouldn’t it be better not to take a leave of absence?”

“Yooou! This! You! You really! Really… Really…”

Eventually, Harriet started to tremble.

…*You see this shit?*

Following this narrative, I knew what would happen next.

“Uuuuuuurg! You… You bad apple… You garbage person… Sob, sob!”

Harriet suddenly burst into tears.

“I don’t want to take off a semester either! I really don’t want to… Sob, sob! Booohooohoo! I’d rather die than become the junior of a beggar like you! I’ll never go bahaahack to Temple!”

Even while we were classmates, she seemed to want to quit Temple just by imagining that I’d become her senior.

I got to know one thing though.

Harriet de Saint-Owan had no intention of taking a leave of absence from Temple.

Adelia was right.

Judging by both of their words, her parents, the Grand Duke of Saint-Owan to be precise, were forcing her.

CHAPTER 78

Harriet cried endlessly, so I eventually tried to pat her back.

Obviously, she started to cry even more, telling me not to touch her.

Not knowing how to soothe a crying kid, I took out some candy from the dining room's storage and gave it to her.

She said that she didn't want to eat it, and when I forcibly pushed it into her mouth, she pretended like she wasn't going to eat it, while actually eating it.

It was so fatally cute, seeing her eating it while crying and denying she would, just because I teased her a bit.

10 out of 10…

Seeing her bite and suck on the candy, there was nothing cuter in this world.

"Just because I was joking around a bit, you end up trembling and crying like a three-year-old brat. Are you a little brat? Do you actually think I'd do that?"

While that girl stopped crying and slowly sucked at her candy with her eyes closed, I couldn't bear it anymore and just shut my mouth. Then she suddenly opened her eyes and stared at me.

"You would! Even if you won't do it to other kids, you'd definitely do it to me!"

Huh. I thought she was being surprisingly straightforward.

Even if I wouldn't do it to other kids, if she took a leave of absence and returned a year later, she thought I'd absolutely tease her to death.

She originally was a kid much smarter than me, after all. She accurately predicted a behavioral pattern I didn't even know I had. At first, she took my telling her not to take a leave of absence as a type of confession, then I teased her for that.

That was how I was acting around her.

If I had a daughter, I thought that I would absolutely tease her the same way I do to her. Gaaah! The more she cried, the more excited I would get, leading to more teasing.

There was a 100% chance that I'd treat her that way.

Harriet seemed confident that if she took a leave of absence, she would end up leading a hellish Temple life as Reinhardt's junior.

"No, well… Honestly, after listening to you, I can't deny that I would do it. So why are you even taking a semester off, then? Is there some sort of problem?"

"And what are you going to do with that information?"

After asking me what I would do with that information, Harriet turned her head with a "Hmpf".

No matter how much you ignored me, despised me and teased me for being a beggar, it was no use.

You had already lost as soon as you followed me here and talked to me.

"What's the point of telling you? You don't seriously think that you can do anything for me, right?"

Actually, I didn't really have any good ideas, but we might come up with something as we talked. And if we couldn't come up with something, and she still wants to absolutely stay in this class, I could always use "Revise". I wasn't sure how many points it would take to make the Grand Duke of Saint-Owan say that Harriet didn't have to take a leave of absence, though.

Harriet seemed to stare at me, narrowing her eyes. She certainly didn't seem to trust me. This probably was similar to grabbing at straws for her.

"Won't it be good for you if I take a leave of absence? You'll get to bully me as much as you want then."

Harriet seemed to be thinking about this completely differently. She thought I'd be

happy, because I'd be able to bully her to my heart's content, so she was wondering why I didn't want her to take that leave.

"Ah, that was a joke. I don't want you to take a leave of absence."

There were some very complicated reasons behind this, but it would be hard for me to explain them to her.

"Why… do you not want me to leave?"

Frickin hell.

Why do I have to keep playing along with this girl?

…She was so excited.

God damn it.

"It's fun just being with you."

Ah.

Honestly, it really was kind of fun. Harriet wrinkled her brows, giving an impression as if she thought that she was an idiot for even expecting anything from me.

"Hey! You just want me not to take a leave of absence to keep teasing me after all!"

"Even if that's the case, what's important are the results! You don't want to take the semester off! I don't want you to take a leave of absence! Regardless of my reasons, our purpose is the same, right?"

Harriet seemed to cuss me out with her eyes. No, I mean, if our goals are the same, what did it matter what my reasons were?

Just looking at her, her attitude was rather ambiguous as to whether she liked me or not. Now she had a really disgusted expression on her face. Well, people can like some parts and hate other parts that make up a person.

In other words, people were like cheonggukjang.

At first it might have smelled like “Ew!” but at some point, one might start thinking differently like:

Ah.

This.

Maybe I didn’t actually hate it that much.

I kind of want to taste it again after such a long time…

Was it something like this?

Anyway, Harriet was really annoyed right now, but she eventually opened her mouth after probably thinking that it couldn’t get any worse anyway.

“Dad… told me to take a leave of absence. Repeatedly.”

As was expected.

* * *

Harriet began to explain her situation.

When the news of the terrorist attack on the Imperial Capital first got spread, the Grand Duke wasn’t outside of the Saint-Owan Grand Duchy. He actually was in the Imperial Capital. As the Empire’s victory celebrations were underway, almost all the powerful nobles should have been in the Imperial Capital at the time.

Harriet didn’t return to the Grand Duchy to meet him, she was still in the Capital. In that case, she could have just returned to Temple immediately, but she didn’t.

“I was told that even Temple was too dangerous, because something like that happened in the middle of the Imperial Capital. That’s why I stayed with Dad all the time…”

After the terrorist attack, the festival as well as all official events connected to it were canceled. Grand Duke Saint-Owan probably kept Harriet somewhere in the vicinity of the Palace or outside the Imperial Capital to protect her. He probably thought it was only natural for him to protect his own daughter with his own hands, at a time

when the Capital's security was already compromised.

The Saint-Owan Grand Duchy was incredibly advanced in the field of magic, and the Grand Duke's family was originally a wizard family. Therefore, it was more or less already set in stone that Harriet de Saint-Owan was born with the most outstanding talent out of all the wizard bloodlines.

She was gifted with the tremendous talent to wield all kinds of magic, including summoning, offensive magic, support magic, magic crafting, mind spells, alchemy and even black magic. Harriet possessed a completely broken talent to masterfully comprehend and acquire any magic in existence.

In other words, as the Saint-Owan family was a family with its roots in magic, the Grand Duke would already be a grand wizard of a high level. He actually participated in the Demon World War after all.

Grand Duke Saint-Owan was currently one of the most powerful wizards the Empire had to offer.

He was more than capable to look after his own daughter, as such he couldn't allow her to continue to attend Temple now that the Imperial Capital's security was compromised. He'd rather have her attend a magic school in their territory or teach her directly, even if the education wouldn't be as good as what Temple could offer.

Quite frankly, if that wasn't the case, she wouldn't have the need to attend Temple in the first place.

"Hearing that, wouldn't he just kept you at his side then?… How did you manage to return to Temple?"

It seemed like Harriet was only able to temporarily return after she whined, cried and made a huge fuss in front of her father who tried to stop her from going back to Temple.

However, he probably heard that it was possible for her to take a leave of absence, so she could continue attending Temple, but only after a year. That was perhaps the compromise Grand Duke Saint-Owan acquiesced to.

A year should be enough for them to catch the culprit and stabilize the Imperial Capital.

The Grand Duke's words were rather reasonable, actually. Rather, Harriet, who insisted on not taking a leave of absence, was the unreasonable one here.

However, the most important thing was that I was pretty damn sure that no more terrorist attacks by demons would occur from this point on. Of course, I couldn't actually predict the future clearly, but the possibility of Harriet being involved in acts of violence by demons was practically nonexistent.

Although, she already was heavily involved in acts of bullying caused by a certain demon.

Anyway, I was the only one who knew that the Grand Duke's worries were completely unwarranted at this point.

"Try crying and whining that you don't want to take a leave of absence."

"I already di…!"

Of course, what she tried to say was that she already did that, but that girl suddenly got startled and quickly covered her mouth. She thought that I might make fun of her again if she told me that she cried while whining to her parents.

"No, it's fine for kids to whine and cry. That's nothing to be ashamed of, you know?"

It would be shameful for me to do something like that, but her doing that was fine. At my words, Harriet's expression turned into a gloomy one. Her face turned beet red again and she let her head hang down slightly.

"It didn't work…"

In the end, she confessed that she was crying and whining desperately. From the Grand Duke's point of view, he wouldn't just let his daughter go just because she was screaming and shouting. Her life was on the line, after all.

"Hmm… What should we do?"

I couldn't come up with any logical reason for the Grand Duke to let his daughter continue to attend Temple this year. At my vague musings, Harriet opened her closed eyes and stared at me.

“What? So you can’t come up with anything as well after all.”

“No, I just said that we should think about this together. Did I say that I knew how to solve this?”

“Hmpf!”

“Shit needs some pushing force to get out as well, right? So, let’s be that force together.”

“Eeeeew! You’re so dirty! I feel like throwing up!”

“What? Don’t you shit?”

“Eww! Urg! Aah!”

As if she was pretending that she couldn’t hear me, Harriet was covering her ears and screamed. It seemed that the more she talked with me, the worse she felt instead of coming to an answer.

It wouldn’t make any sense to tell him that she’d lag behind if she were to take a leave of absence now. This kid was special in more ways than one, so the Grand Duke might just hire numerous wizards from his territory to personally train her.

How about a childish reason like she doesn’t want to be separated from her friends? Grand Duke Saint-Owan might just tell her she’d see them again in a year anyway.

There was little reason to let Harriet continue to attend Temple.

Justification.

I wondered whether it was really necessary for a kid to take such a long break from school, but we didn’t have any justification. I was completely sure that it would be safe, but I doubted the Grand Duke would believe that…

No, I mean, even the Prince and the Princess were calmly attending Temple, so how come the Grand Duke was acting this way even though he’s just some little fart compared to them?

I suddenly got mad.

Ah. Come to think of it, that's right.

How about using that line of reasoning?

"The Prince and the Princess are just calmly attending Temple. Right?"

Both of them didn't seem to have any intentions of taking a leave of absence. The Imperial Palace and Temple were both in the Imperial Capital to begin with, so taking a leave of absence was pretty much meaningless.

"……Huh."

"But if you suddenly take a leave of absence in this situation, wouldn't the two of them think slightly badly of the Saint-Owan Family?"

"H, huh? Tha, that's… What are you talking about?"

Harriet paled when I suddenly mentioned the prince and princess.

"No, that would work. Both of these precious people still went to Temple even after this incident took place in the Capital, you, on the other hand, who's just from a Grand Duchy, are taking a leave of absence because the Capital is too dangerous. If we just expand on this a little more, couldn't we make it out to be the Grand Duke ignoring the security Temple has to offer and thus completely ignoring the Prince and Princess' security?"

"Huuh…?"

Of course, everything depended on how one said something. In fact, if one had to decide whether those two would or wouldn't care about this matter, it was safe to say that they probably didn't care. However, there was a possibility that it could turn into an issue as long as we brought it up like this.

And these were quite sensitive times.

The Royal Class also was on edge because of the Prince and Princess. So the atmosphere inside the Imperial Palace would be even more tense.

To say something like "I'm making her take a leave of absence because it's to dangerous here!" would be quite the thing during these sensitive times.

Besides, she was classmates with the Prince of all people, not just any ordinary Temple student.

Depending on how one interpreted this situation, it could be possible to infer that this was quite offending towards the Prince. While the Prince was still devastated by this terrorist attack, the little princess of the Saint-Owan Grand Duchy decided to take a leave of absence, because she thought Temple was much too dangerous.

This could be read as the act of throwing boulders at a very thin sheet of ice.

“Bertus and you are even in the same class. And even though it might not be intentional, you might end up hurting the Prince with these actions. Additionally, though the Capital might have experienced this type of incident, the Imperial Family still held the most authority since its foundation right now. If you lose favor of either of them, you might face a lot of problems later on. It’s also very important to note that this isn’t even a matter of choosing a side, as you might end up offending both with your actions.”

It wasn’t a matter of abandoning one side and switching over to another. One might end up losing both of their favor.

Harriet’s face had gone completely pale as she heard my words. No matter how strong her sense of superiority and nobility was, she tended to cower before those of higher rank than her.

“S, so… So, what should I do? Isn’t this really bad?”

……No, why was she like this?

“…Hey, you idiot. I’m telling you to persuade your father with these words. Why are you the one getting persuaded here?”

“Ah… Huh?”

Harriet was so surprised by this that she couldn’t even respond properly to me.

If we really stretched it like this, it would certainly seem like a pretty serious problem, but in reality it most likely wasn’t one. That was why I tried to tell her to use this reason that they might offend certain people in these sensitive times by making her take a leave of absence, which would cause a lot of problems.

However, this girl thought this was a real situation happening right now, so she was shaking in her boots.

“Do you seriously think they’d get that offended if you just took a leave of absence?”

It was true that the family of the Grand Duke Saint-Owan were very powerful. They were a family that wouldn’t even flinch by something like that, even if they might offend someone a little.

In other words, the only ones who were of a comparable rank, except the Prince and Princess, were A-3 Liana de Grantz, the daughter of Duke Grantz, and A-6 Heinrich, who was part of Kernstadt’s royalty.

“It’s just something I fabricated. In reality, there’s a high chance that they wouldn’t care, but it’s important for your father to take this seriously. So let’s just put it this way. If it was really that dangerous in Temple, why were they still staying there? So this would actually mean it’s safe. Also tell your father that you won’t bend.”

“O, ooh…”

Harriet nodded her head, showing her understanding. I wasn’t sure if this would work or not, but it was worth trying at least.

“Now, there are two reasons. The first is that the current situation was quite sensitive, so taking a leave of absence might make a very bad impression on the Prince and Princess. The second is that they both continue to attend Temple because they are confident that it was safe there, and even if it wasn’t before, right now Temple’s security is even higher than before, so it should be even safer than before as well. Put it like that.”

“Ah, ye… yes.”

Harriet nodded at my stormy words. Well, I really couldn’t vouch for its success, but it was better than nothing. I mean, Harriet kind of reached out to me, so if she had a better idea later on she could just use that as well.

It would have been even better if it was Bertus who told her not to take a leave of absence.

If Bertus requested her not to take one, the effect of my reasoning would have been

maximized. Wouldn't it be even better if he put it a bit more round about, as well? It would be sufficient if he just expressed that desire indirectly.

That way, the listener could interpret the message however they wanted. Even if Bertus only told her that because he didn't want his classmate to repeat a year.

Should I ask Bertus to say something to Harriet pertaining to the leave of absence story?

This would make things clear, but I was extremely reluctant to owe him something. I thought I should push that thought back for now.

Anyway, after having listened to everything I had to say, Harriet was staring at me blankly.

"Wha… What's with you?"

If one were to carefully listen to this, one would realize that it was a lie, maybe that was why she was looking at me like that. However, it could also be that she was surprised that I actually came up with something like that.

"In the end, something will come out after squeezing hard enough."

"What?"

Herriet's expression grew even weirder, as if she didn't know what I was talking about. After that, Harriet and I continued to talk about the specifics.

"No, you can just say whatever comes to mind… Well, we could also write a script if you want, you know?."

"I would get nervous and forget all the lines!"

"Fricking Hell. Are you really a magic major student?"

"I'm not an idiot!"

"No, I didn't even call you an idiot just now, you know? Are you really some kind of idiot, though?"

“You didn’t say it right now, but you did before! You idiot!”

As such, we kept on bickering and talking in the dining hall. Before I noticed it, night had already fallen.

“……”

“Oh. You’re here.”

“Huh?”

And that was when Ellen Artorius appeared, like always.

CHAPTER 79

She was staring intently at us while we were scrambling to come up with solutions. Tonight, I wasn't able to take even a single step into the training room, because I was brainstorming with this girl the whole time. Ellen was wearing her towel, which she always took with her after she ended her training, over her shoulder.

Harriet looked at her and stiffened slightly.

"Ah…"

Ellen didn't talk to anyone but me. Although Harriet was openly dismissive of commoners, the atmosphere around Ellen was slightly different even though she was a commoner as well.

Even if she pretended to be otherwise, she was still the type that was hard to deal with. In fact, just by looking at the power datasheet posted on our class bulletin board, one could see that Ellen had physical abilities incomparable to those of her classmates.

She was special.

Everyone recognized her as such.

So Harriet seemed to freeze up when she looked at Ellen, although for different reasons than when she was in front of Bertus.

Harriet was weak in front of the strong.

She despised people who she could afford to despise, but she had difficulties with those who had more power than her, making her turn completely shy.

In the original, I didn't really set her up as such a character, but as I was constantly around her, I could observe that aspect of her very clearly.

Anyway, it seemed that it was now time for Ellen to come here to eat her late night snack. Come to think of it, I got so used to eating at this time that I got hungry even if

I didn't train at all.

"Hey, what do you wanna eat?"

"What… Eating?"

"No, well, I'm hungry."

Harriet seemed confused when I suddenly posed such a question. Ellen was still standing there, so I beckoned her to sit down next to me.

It was always just the two of us, so it was a first that we had a third person eating with us.

"Wait."

Before I knew it, Ellen had gotten quite used to eating the things I made. She also made something from time to time, but in terms of ratio it would be four to one. For every four times I could, she would do it once.

I glanced at Harriet and Ellen sitting across from each other.

Ellen just sat there blankly with her chin propped up on her palm, not thinking about a thing, but Harriet's face was slightly red again, perhaps because of this extreme awkwardness.

It sure was a funny sight.

* * *

I made some simple chop steaks. Usually I only made simple things for late night snacks. I was almost always completely exhausted, so I couldn't really afford to make anything complicated.

Because the meat was of such a high quality, one could honestly just grill it with a bit of salt and it would be good to go. I tended to make some side dishes as well.

However, I didn't train today, so I had plenty of stamina left, as such I decided to put some work into this. Of course, it still wouldn't be anything difficult to make, though.

“Ah, if someone’s cooking for you, doesn’t politeness dictate that one should set the table?”

“H, huh?”

Harriet suddenly showed me a bewildered expression. Ellen, however, got up as if she was already familiar with this, took out the utensils and dishes, and placed them one by one on the table. Harriet looked even more bewildered when she saw Ellen listening to me obediently.

She was just staring at this scene of Ellen moving about as if she was familiar with this motion, as if she didn’t understand what was going on.

And also…

“Why… Why are there so many?”

Looking at that plate filled with an enormous amount of Chop steaks, Harriet had her mouth slightly open.

“You’ll know when you see what happens next.”

Watching Ellen take the food, I wondered what kind of expression Harriet would make next.

Munch, munch, munch

Ellen was eating at an abnormal speed right from the start. Harriet, wearing a surprised expression, stabbed a chop steak with her fork, a mystified look in her eyes.

“……You knew how to cook?”

“Rather than calling it cooking, it’s just enough to make stuff edible. Don’t look down on life on the streets.”

“Ah…”

It didn’t look very delicious, but that didn’t mean it wasn’t edible at all. Compared to the food her professional chefs made, this is probably far below in quality.

However, she seemed surprised that I made something that was actually edible.

“Don’t force yourself to eat it.”

That was what I told her while I stabbed my fork into the chop steaks in front of me. She didn’t have to force herself to eat this stuff, because we had a certain someone sitting right across from her that would absorb anything that was left. Harriet ate slowly while playing with her fork.

To be honest, I imagined her spitting it out after eating a bit of it, saying it was tasteless. In fact, she probably only ever ate high-quality food.

However, even though she was only eating at a slow pace, she was still eating quite well.

* * *

“Wow…”

Harriet couldn’t keep her mouth shut when she saw that the pan was already completely empty. Ellen ate everything like nothing, and only took a sip of water with a calm expression on her face.

Yeah, although I saw this phenomenon all the time, it even surprised me all the time. Sometimes I felt like punching her for being so shameless to eat almost everything by herself and then looking like she ate nothing at all.

It felt like she’d act all ‘coy’ after eating everything on her own like a pig.

After eating, Ellen put all the utensils in the pan and started clearing and cleaning the table. If I made the food, she’d clean up, and when she made the food, I’d clean up.

Harriet was staring blankly at Ellen’s practiced behavior.

“……You seem to be very close. Do you eat like this every night?”

Harriet asked with her voice lowered.

“Yeah. We’d usually have a meal around this time after I got beaten up enough.”

“What? You get beaten?”

Harriet had a startled expression plastered on her face when she heard me talk about fighting. Well, she had no reason to visit the training room, so she wouldn’t have any idea what was going on in there every day.

She probably thought I wasn’t the type to be beaten up even if someone were to hit me, but now she heard that I got beat up by Ellen every day. Her eyes oozed disbelief.

Well, she wasn’t in the changing room, so she didn’t see.

I smiled slightly and lifted my shirt, revealing my bruised abdomen and flanks.

“Wha, what are you doing…! Y, you, what happened? What’s wrong with your body?”

When I suddenly lifted my shirt, she was slightly startled and freaked out, but when she saw my bare skin full of bruises, her complexion immediately blanched.

“My pseudo-swordsmanship is so terrible, that I’m always in her care.”

“P, pseudo-swordsmanship?”

Yes, pseudo-swordsmanship.

It still hasn’t evolved yet!

“And, hey.”

I looked at Harriet, who was staring at my wounds in a daze, and called out to her.

“Wha, what?”

“Ya know? If someone cooks for you, you should at least clean up the table. Don’t you think you have to get a move on if you take the hint?”

You have to follow the rules of the restaurant as well.

“What are you doing? Haven’t you started making some coffee or tea yet?”

“Wha, what”

When I ordered the great princess to make some coffee, she looked absolutely shocked.

* * *

“W, why… Why do I have to do this…?”

Harriet brought a can of black tea to the table, even while her face was blushing hot red as if her pride got damaged. Even though she grumbled and asked why she had to do something like that, followed by my reply that she had to do something at least. However, she never threw a complete tantrum or said that she would absolutely never do it.

Well, it was probably her attendants who did these things for her back at home.

However, this was Temple. Although there were some personnel, they weren’t present around this time.

“Wha, what the hell is this…?”

Her expression, contorted by contempt while pouring tea into Ellen’s and my teacup, was excellent.

She was probably thinking something like: “Why, why me? Why do I have to be treated like that? This just doesn’t make any sense!”

All of that could be easily read from that expression of hers, still, she obediently did what was asked of her.

So cute.

You’re really the best, idiot.

“Jeez, did you ever try Bertus’ tea before?”

Actually, Bertus treated me to black tea earlier today. In fact, every time we talked on that terrace, he tended to brew me some tea.

Of course, he didn’t do that out of respect for me, but because he knew that I was a complete stranger to tea and all that in the first place, so he’d rather do it himself

than let me do this.

If it were me who brewed the tea, he wouldn't even touch it.

"Bertus…? Brewed you tea?"

However, it seemed like Harriet was only astonished to hear that Bertus brewed tea for someone like me.

"So if we were to compare your tea with his, it wouldn't even deserve to be on the same table."

"H, huh! Hah! Wha, what… What…"

Me bragging about this, even though it was the Prince who brewed the tea, managed to make Harriet's face red again.

We usually didn't have something like a tea time after our late night snack, but I still made Harriet brew some tea just to make her do something. I mean, ingesting caffeine before going to bed wasn't good after all.

Ellen began to dismiss that tea and focused on the cookies she took out.

"Are you only drinking tea right now so that you can eat these cookies?

"That's right."

As if to emphasize her answer, Ellen kept on shoving cookies into her mouth. Harriet was staring blankly at that scene, seemingly exhausted. I quietly nodded after noticing her gaze that seemed to ask if Ellen was always like that.

"…If you eat that much,… won't you get fat?"

"I won't."

Harriet looked at me blankly.

I felt like I had a déjà vu.

Redina asked something similar recently. Did they share the same brain cell? They

even had the same expression.

I didn't explain this time, because I was too tired to even start.

Ellen left some cookies for me and Harriet to eat and then quietly drank her tea. Thanks to having told her not to cross the line myriads of times, she didn't eat everything on her own.

Harriet seemed restless. Well, even though she despised me for being a beggar, she seemed to have difficulties, being in Ellen's presence, even though she was a commoner. I mean, the atmosphere around Ellen did kind of make it hard to approach her. Harriet seemed especially unfamiliar with her silence.

Even when she was with me, she didn't talk all that much.

"How did you two… become friends?"

No matter how one looked at it, there seemed to be no reason for Ellen to befriend the mad dog Reinhardt. Ellen looked between me and Harriet alternately, sipping her tea, before she put down her cup.

She looked at me limpidly.

It felt like she was debating whether she should say it or not. What the hell was she trying to say…

No way.

"At first, he gave me a letter…"

"Don't say it!"

Why did she start from there!

When I suddenly jumped up like that, Ellen closed her mouth and Harriet stared at me.

No, well, I thought she forgot about it, because she never mentioned that incident again, but she actually didn't! Of course, it was only natural for one to remember something like that, but I thought she didn't give it any meaning, so why?

Of course, it was usually something quite meaningful, but that wasn't the point right now.

"Tha, that's right. W, we take swordsmanship classes together, and because of that duel the other day, erm, I asked her to help me with my training, so she did. Yeah, that's how it went!"

"Yes. That's right."

Ellen nodded her head quietly at my fierce stare, asking her to agree. I mean, it wasn't wrong after all.

Perhaps because I was just too flustered, what came out of my mouth was this stuttered explanation. Harriet just nodded her head, seeming slightly surprised by my fussy explanation. After I was done, I felt a sudden embarrassment come over me for moving so abruptly like that.

"A, anyway. L, let's talk tomorrow. Make sure to tell me how it went. Got it?"

"……I don't know why I should do that, but fine."

After saying that, Harriet told us that she was tired and got up from her seat, returning to her dormitory room. It was almost past curfew.

"Hey… What were you going to say…?"

Ellen tilted her head at my whining.

"That you wrote to me, you fell in love at first sight with me."

"……I'm sorry. Please spare me."

Ellen held the attitude of someone not involved in this matter. What she said was obviously true though.

I wrote a love letter to a classmate and then got dumped.

There were 200 Points on the line at that time. If I had known that I would receive over 6000 points later on, I wouldn't have done this!

I was blinded by the allure of 200 Points!

“Was it a lie?”

At the sound of Ellen’s subdued voice, I looked straight at her.

It was a lie. I was sure that she wouldn’t spread any rumors about this, even if she ended up rejecting me.

Ellen didn’t say anything other than her refusal at the time. However, now she admitted that this was how we got to know each other and asked me if my confession was a lie.

If I tell her the truth, would she be hurt?

Wouldn’t it be even weirder for me to lie about this kind of stuff?

“……Ehm.”

In the end, I had no other choice but to tell her that I lied to her in exchange for 200 Points.

Ellen took a sip from her tea again, then nodded.

“I thought so.”

Ellen was already aware that I was lying the moment I gave her that letter.

“I’m sorry.”

I had no excuses to tell or grounds to give a rational explanation.

I could only apologize.

“It’s fine.”

After she said that, Ellen just continued to quietly drink her tea.

She didn’t even ask me why I lied to her like that.

CHAPTER 80

The next morning.

I went down to the lobby to prepare for my morning workout as usual.

“Hey, Reinhardt.”

“Ah, yes. Hello.”

The usual members of the early morning exercise squad began to appear one after the other. They were all part of the high school section, but I didn’t know most of them. The seniors that I got to know because of that duel greeted me warmly.

……What might this be? This uncomfortable yet pleasant feeling.

Among the first years there were three members of the early morning exercise squad: Me, Ludwig, and Ellen. The ones that only appear occasionally were Bertus, Cliffman and Scarlett.

Ellen went ahead first while I was waiting for Adriana. We didn’t make any plans, but I was sure that she would show up.

“Heya, Reinhardt. Out early again today?”

“Yeah.”

Ludwig, who was in sportswear, greeted me brightly, to which I nodded.

“……Huh?”

In addition to him, two other people in sportswear were walking out of the first year dormitory.

“If you feel tired, you have to rest. Don’t overdo it.”

B-3, Scarlett.

“Yes, yes. I got it. And talk comfortably to me. We’re in the same grade.”

And Number B-1 Charlotte de Gardias.

“Tha, that’s… I can’t help it. It became a habit…”

“Fufu. You’ll get used to it bit by bit.”

The two of them came out to do their morning workout together.

“If I’m disturbing you, you can just leave me behind. I don’t want to force myself on you. Your training is more important after all, right?”

“No, no. You still have to look after your health… I’ll just watch.”

Yesterday, when Charlotte saw Scarlett getting bullied by Erich, she couldn’t stand it anymore. I had no idea what happened in the dorms after that, but Charlotte seemed to have decided to work out with Scarlett in the morning.

It seemed like Charlotte made it clear that she wanted to make Scarlett her own.

The two of them made eye contact with me, as I was standing around in the lobby.

“Erm, Hello? Reinhardt.”

“Huh… Hello.”

Charlotte smiled slightly at me as she greeted me. Since she came to know that my power would help her find Valier, she wasn’t so harsh on me anymore.

She was slightly different from Bertus in that sense. Scarlett just looked at me and slightly bowed her head towards me. We weren’t really close, but it seemed like she held a certain sense of unity towards me. In the end, she didn’t move according to my advice, but Scarlett’s suffering would come to an end now that she is under Charlotte’s protection.

All her problems would be solved, albeit in a different way.

The kidnapping of Delphine Izadra never happened, and Scarlett’s bullying was taken care of by Charlotte.

……It felt like Ludwig's existence was becoming more and more redundant.

The one who was supposed to be the main character was gradually become just the guy in the last place of Class B! Nothing more nor less!

Was it really fine for the main character's influence to become less and less?

However, wasn't it kind of prejudiced that the main character had to hog the attention of all the other characters around him?

Was this really so bad? Wouldn't his future destination still be the same, even if he took a different way? Ludwig was a crazy hard worker, so he would thrive in any kind of environment. He'd end up overpowered no matter what happened.

In the midst of my contemplation whether the story was heading towards a really strange direction or whether it was still okay…

"I'm sorry, junior. I kept you waiting."

The always calm and kind church sister was walking down the stairs.

* * *

Adriana praised me for my increase in stamina while we were working out together after a while.

"You worked hard, junior. It isn't that big a change, but your stamina has certainly increased."

"That's good to hear."

"Okay. Let's keep it up."

In the week Adriana was gone, it was clear that my physical abilities had improved a little. I definitely felt less tired than before.

"So shall we pick up the pace a bit then?"

"……Huh?"

Of course, I was still far below Adriana's standard.

"Pant… Huff… Haah…"

It was good and all that my stamina increased, but Adriana increased the difficulty just as much as I improved, so I was exhausted again.

So what would happen when I improved even more? That monster would work me until I was completely drained, no matter what. My future still seemed bleak.

"Still, you did great for being able to follow me up to this point."

After running a lap, doing some muscle training and some aerobic exercises, Adriana and I sat down on a bench to rest.

"By the way, I heard that Demons attacked the Knights Templar."

Even though Adriana had just returned from the monastery located in the Saint-Owan Grand Duchy, she, of course, heard about this piece of news.

"That's what they said."

I could see slight anger in Adriana's calm eyes.

"These demons have not yet been exterminated."

This sentence was loaded with her will to participate in the hunt immediately. Even Adriana, who was always gentle, hated the demons with all her being. I was kind of curious about what kind of expression she would make if she ever found out that I was actually a Demon Prince. Would she look at me superficially, or would she take my inner self into consideration?

It would probably be hard for her to see me as someone on the good side, though.

"They say there were no fatalities."

"Yeah, I'm honestly glad about that. They were surely under God's protection."

Sure, God's protection. It was me who took care that no one would end up dying. Of course, I managed to do that using the Revise Function, but it was still fortunate that

none of the Knights Templar ended up dying.

Well, I was kind of this world's God of Creation, so me using the Revise Function to ensure no one died could be called God's protection, right?

What? So she was wrong, but actually right.

"There might be a second Demon World War happening soon."

That was what Sarkegaar hoped for, but it wasn't something I wanted to happen. Come to think of it, Adriana seemed to have longed to join the Knights Templar.

"Are you going to join the Knights Templar?"

Adriana was already able to use her divine power very well. She was even using them right now. With that level of talent, the Knights Templar would probably let her join with no questions asked.

Adriana nodded to answer my question.

"Originally, I was planning on attending Graduate School, but now I want to go join them as soon as I graduate from Royal Class."

Adriana originally wanted to go to Graduate School. However, because of this incident, she seemed to want to join the Knights Templar immediately after she finished her 6 years in Royal Class. Because Demons ran rampant inside the Imperial Capital, Adriana decided to change her course of action.

"Well…"

"What's the matter, junior?"

Adriana looked at me, wondering if there was something wrong.

From what I had seen before, the Knights Templar seemed to be a corrupt organization. The reason why they took the succubi from that black market was because they had similar intentions. If that were to be discovered, they'd just say they took them for research purposes or something. They would just give some reasonable excuses to appease the masses.

It wasn't known to me from where that corruption originated from or how obvious it was, but the Knights Templar were already one of the most powerful armed forces, so it was pretty hard to simply believe that they were completely innocent.

I can't deny that I was a little worried about Adriana joining a group like that. If Adriana were to join that place, would she get disillusioned and leave the group? Or would she become an equally corrupt Paladin?

"No. It's just…"

Adriana's eyes were so pure.

I had no right to tell Adriana to not join the Knights Templar. In fact, this was still quite far off in the future at the moment.

Anyway.

It felt really strange seeing the incident I caused making such big waves everywhere around me. For me, this was just a simple incident I caused to rescue some demons.

However, it ended up becoming a reason for the unity of the Empire to become stronger.

For some it was the reason to take a leave of absence from Temple.

For others it became the reason to quickly join the military.

Witnessing with my own eyes how a single event triggered hundreds and thousands of connected events, it honestly felt unreal. I knew that everything in the world was somehow connected, but because this connection was now pushed right in front of my eyes, I was experiencing this new feeling.

It wasn't in the least predictable what my actions would cause.

-Shall we take a rest?

-Haah… Haah… No… W, we can still do some more.

-I think you should rest for a bit, Charlotte.

-No… No… I'm fine…

I could see Scarlett and Charlotte running in the distance. Anyone could see that her stamina was already exhausted, but it seemed like Charlotte was trying to continue with her teeth clenched.

In a way, this scene wasn't that much different from my training. The silent pressure Charlotte put on Erich stopped his bullying behavior. That was probably also why Charlotte was talking with Scarlett like that.

Everything in this world had a cause and effect.

But it was giving me a serious headache, thinking about how a single cause would lead to hundreds of events, and those events would lead to hundreds of different effects.

There just had been too many consequences for my actions. Hundreds of thousands of them.

If that were the case, causal reasoning would become completely meaningless. Because these vast amounts of causal effects could only be called chaos.

In the end, there was only one conclusion.

"The Princess sure is enthusiastic."

"I know, right?"

I couldn't smooth out all the consequences my actions brought.

* * *

In Harriet's case, I wasn't exactly sure how her situation would conclude. There was also Liana de Grantz left. If she were to decide to take a leave of absence, I wouldn't know how to stop her from doing that. We didn't even exchange a single word yet. In Harriet's case, we had this bad relationship connecting us. Even a bad relationship was still a kind of relationship after all. So I could talk things over with her…

The solution to that problem came from a rather strange place.

After breakfast, I could see Bertus having a conversation with Liana de Grantz.

"……Huh?"

"As I was saying. I believe it would be better to avoid taking a leave of absence if possible."

Liana tilted her head at Bertus' straight words.

"I'm not forcing you. It is your choice, but wouldn't it be better to stay together in the same class than changing our relationship into a vague one like senior and junior after already having paid tuition for this year?"

"Ah……"

Bertus was speaking very kindly. He wasn't forcing her, he was just telling her that he would feel sad if the class fell apart. However, the intention behind that smile of his was very obvious.

'If you quit the class, prepare yourself for the consequences.'

That was what he actually meant. Liana slightly nodded her head with a firm expression, not clear if she understood his intentions or not.

"Okay. I'll let them know."

After all, a Prince was still a Prince.

In fact, a request from Bertus was no different from an order. Rather, it was even more compelling because he worded it as just a request.

'Look, I'm honoring you so much, I'm even asking you favors.'

That was how this was to be understood.

What?

Obviously, Bertus was the best choice if I wanted to dissuade them from taking a leave of absence. Actually, asking him to persuade the children to not take a leave of absence was my ace in the hole, even if I would be in Bertus' debt.

However, even though I didn't ask him to do it, Bertus was dissuading them of his own accord.

* * *

It was only natural.

"Wha, what should I do!"

Harriet came to me with her face completely pale.

Tuesday was the day I had the lectures I personally signed up for, so I wouldn't really run into Harriet. She dragged me to the front door of the Royal Class dorm when I was on my way to my morning lectures.

I could guess why she was doing this.

"What? Did Bertus tell you not to take a leave of absence?"

"H, how did you know?"

"I saw him telling that to de Grantz earlier."

He told Liana de Grantz, so, of course, he would also tell Harriet the same thing. That was why she got very confused and immediately came to find me and ask me what to do in that situation.

"What do I do? I don't want to get on his bad side."

Harriet was in tears, thinking that she would end up dying if she went against the Prince's wishes. She didn't know how he was on the inside, only his facade, but if what he said was enough to make her come whine to me, he seemed to let a bit of his intentions slip.

"What do you mean, what should you do? This is a good thing."

"A good thing…?"

"No, wasn't that what we planned your excuse to be. Now it actually became true. It would be easier for you to convince your parents now, so how is this something

difficult to deal with?"

Her primary excuse was that Bertus didn't want her to take a leave of absence, so she shouldn't, to save the Prince's face. However, Bertus actually told her just that. So this would make it the truth and not an excuse.

Rather, Bertus prepared the best stage one could hope for. I couldn't thank him enough, but here she was trembling like a newborn calf because she thought she really annoyed Bertus.

"But still… Even if I convince them that I shouldn't take a leave of absence… Doesn't Bertus hate me now?"

Of course, the chances that she wouldn't get forced to take a leave of absence rose pretty steeply, but that didn't change the fact that she tried to take one, so she wasn't exactly erased from Bertus' black list. Rather, he might have some plans for the future.

"Idiot. Can you hear me? I think it would be more rude to just write him off like that."

"Huh? Wha, what… what?"

I found out one more characteristic that that girl had. If she was in a state of heightened stress or fear, she wouldn't even retort when I called her an idiot. She had already accepted Idiot as a word that was used to address her. That acceptance even reached her subconscious.

"Maybe he just told you that with completely pure intentions. Maybe he just didn't want our class to get split like that, you know?"

"I, I see…"

"The fact that you think Bertus is being stubborn or annoyed by you already means that you treat him like some kind of jerk."

Worrying like this, if the Prince got annoyed or angry, was the same as thinking that the Prince was a total jerk to begin with. That was the moment Harriet realized what she was doing, her face turning even paler than usual.

"N, No! It's not like that! I… I didn't think that at all."

“Then just relax. Because that guy’s much more broadminded than you think.”

He was so broadminded, in fact, that he didn’t give a damn if nobles, commoners or beggars spoke informally to him, because to him, they were all the same.

Harriet’s eyes widened as I spoke about Bertus as if I knew him very well. She seemed to ask me with her eyes how I knew these things.

“Tha, that’s right… You said he brewed you some tea as well…”

She might have thought something like ‘*Are you telling me that you two are close enough to drink tea together?’* or *‘Bertus is so generous to brew a lowly beggar like him some tea?’*

I’d put my money on the latter, knowing this punk.

Harriet’s face, that had been very pale up until now, seemed to return to its usual color, her expression seeming more reassured.

“What a relief… A, anyway, tha, tha… thanks…”

No, no matter how relieved she felt, she even managed to thank me? Of course, it wasn’t something easy for her to do, so her face seemed a little red again.

That girl began to stumble as if she lost the strength in her legs and walked towards the tram stop.

“Where are you going? I have to ride the next one as well.”

“……Ah.”

It was quite the cringy situation, having to take the same bus as a friend one just said goodbye to.

“What exactly were you thankful for? Tell me in detail.”

As I spoke, her face turned cherry red again.

“Go away! I’ll just walk!”

Harriet huffed and distanced herself from the station.

Then she began to realize that she would have to go quite far, so she returned with an even redder face.

CHAPTER 81

On Tuesdays, I had swordsmanship classes with Ellen and learned horseback riding in the afternoon. Perhaps my pseudo-swordsmanship skill was still a type of swordsmanship, my dedicated swordsmanship teacher praised me, saying that my skills seemed to have improved quite a bit.

“You seem to practice a lot, right?”

“This is much better than before.”

The teaching assistants told me that they could see that I had been working hard even while there weren’t any lectures, so they complimented me quite a lot.

On the other hand.

-Hmm… I don’t think this is enough yet, Ellen.

-Yes.

-Let’s try a little more. It was a little disappointing, you know? You need to lower your center of gravity.

-Yes.

Ellen was directly learning from the swordsmanship teacher not one of the assistants, but she was getting scolded a lot more, rather than receiving praise. Actually, it was Ellen who received the most criticism here.

That was only natural.

I started from 0 after all. So even a little bit of progress got praised excessively.

However, Ellen’s starting point was at 100. She did extremely well to begin with, meaning no real improvement, so there was nothing to really praise. These were classes, not some sort of competition, and the teachers, no matter how perfect a student was, had to somehow teach them something.

So, Ellen, who had swordsmanship skills incomparable to her other classmates, got subjected to incredibly high standards.

It's like someone who previously got 0 points for a test getting 10 points, so they get praised. On the other hand, someone who had 90 points on their test and would continue to just get 90 points. They would be questioned why they didn't improve even a bit.

That was the advantage of being a trash character.

What would have happened if I entered into that sword genius, Ellen's body?

-It's still not enough. Your sense of distance between the swords is still lacking.

They probably would have questioned why this gifted kid suddenly became so sloppy.

"Hup!"

"Okay, Reinhardt! Let's do that one more time! You're doing great!"

I was actually pretty fortunate that I entered that incompetent Valier's body.

However.

"Reinhardt? What's wrong?"

"Ah, no. I just got a little discouraged…"

I got slightly disappointed in myself for thinking that I was lucky for having entered such a loafer's body.

* * *

As always, I had lunch with Ellen after our lessons, then I went to my horseback riding class. Harriet probably hadn't talked with the Grand Duke yet. I wondered how things would go.

In Liana's case, Bertus talked to her, but I didn't actually know how things would go on her end. Anyway, it would be nice if none of the children took a leave of absence

based on Bertus' sudden action.

With these thoughts occupying my mind, I returned to the dormitory. Arriving there, I found someone quite unexpected waiting for me.

"Ah, Reinhardt."

"……Charlotte?"

"Do you have some time?"

It was Charlotte who was waiting for me there.

She then made quite a weird request of me, without an inkling of hesitation.

"How about we go outside for a bit?"

"Huh. Will that be alright?"

She only asked me to go outside with her. No, but at this time?

"We won't be able to go out yet, though… The ban hasn't been lifted yet, right?"

The investigation into that demonic terrorist incident shouldn't have been completed yet. So the ban on Temple Students shouldn't have been lifted yet, either. Hearing my words, Charlotte looked slightly sullen.

"There are some exceptions."

I couldn't refute that the Prince and Princess were pretty much treated like a special existence even in Temple.

"But without any escorts? Is that really okay?"

"It should be fine."

It seemed clear that Charlotte was just trying to leave Temple with me alone.

What? Is that what one called denseness? Charlotte covered her mouth and laughed, seeing the look on my face.

“At the moment, there are only three people inside the Empire who are probably the safest at the moment.”

Charlotte pointed a finger somewhere. She roughly pointed in the direction of the Imperial Palace.

“I’m sure, you know who one of them is.”

Then she pointed towards the dormitory.

“Then there’s Bertus.”

After that, she pointed at herself.

“And me.”

I didn’t know what the basis for this theory was, but she seemed convinced that she wouldn’t be harmed in the least.

* * *

Charlotte would only be with me, but she wasn’t the least bit nervous.

No one was allowed to go outside at the moment, Charlotte, on the other hand, was able to go out and even take me with her just by talking to the people positioned at the entrance of Temple. They didn’t even ask why we wanted to go out.

Classes ended at 3 pm, so there was still a long time until the sun set. Charlotte slipped over a robe that seemed to have been prepared in advance. Charlotte’s face was much more well known than Bertus’ at the moment.

As I kept feeling anxious, Charlotte just faintly smiled at me from inside her robe.

“You really don’t have to worry. No matter what might happen, there are defensive measures in place.”

Charlotte walked ahead as if she had no worries at all.

“But where are we going?”

“The Aligar district’s shopping street.”

That was the moment I realized why she wanted to go out today.

The wanted to go to the place Valier was last seen. Charlotte planned on investigating herself.

* * *

Charlotte in her robe and me wearing my casual clothes boarded a mana train.

“Couldn’t we just use Warp Gates?”

Of course, there were only a few people who actually used warp gates to travel between districts.

The Warp Gates weren’t something one could use for free usually, but if it was the Imperial Princess, I was pretty sure that we would get a free pass.

While we were shaken around by the train, Charlotte froze at my words.

“Since the incident last time, the Warp Gate management procedures have been strengthened a lot more. I don’t want to leave a record.”

“Ah.”

The demon prisoners escaped via the Warp Gates. Although that fact wasn’t known by the public, because of that, the forces guarding the Warp Gates increased and the security checks done on the Warp Gate’s users seemed to have gotten considerably stricter.

I should also have been among the ones not in the know why the security measures around the Warp Gates had been strengthened.

“What do the Warp Gates have to do with that incident?”

“Hmm… I’ll tell you when we get off.”

Charlotte gestured to me to wait. She probably didn’t want to talk about these things in such a crowded area.

We went out like that because we wanted to visit that place with just the two of us, but wasn't there a possibility that Bertus or one of his subordinates was following us? Could we be sure that we didn't have a tail on us? Or did Charlotte not care about that?

She might be one of the people safest in the Empire, but I wasn't, you know? Bertus was already treating me like someone firmly attached to him, or at least he had his eyes pretty strongly focused on me. So what excuse should I give him, if he caught me doing this?

Anyway.

I was riding a mana train with the Princess who suddenly asked me out.

This sure was a unique experience one wouldn't encounter every day.

* * *

We got off at the Aligar District station and headed towards the shopping street.

"The suspects who caused that incident escaped via the Warp Gates. That's why."

Charlotte didn't tell me about the demon prisoners black market trade.

"Didn't they follow them through the Gate?"

"They were cautious. They activated the Gate by force, went through it, and destroyed the Warp Gate on the other side after they came out."

It was quite arduous to ask her questions like someone who had no idea about this incident as someone who knew all about it. Charlotte calmly told me what she could.

"Anyway, why are you taking me to the Aligar District shopping street. Can't you see that I feel like I'm walking on an extremely narrow tightrope right now?"

If I got stuck between Bertus and Charlotte like that, I'd lose a lot of my freedom of movement. Rather than having to escape because my true identity got discovered, I might actually have to escape because those two got wind that I'm a sort of double agent.

Bertus should already know that Charlotte and I have a certain connection. He just didn't tell me yet that he knew. The same should go for Charlotte.

"I know what you're worried about."

Still, it was true that I leaned more towards Charlotte because of the guilt I felt towards her, so I could speak more frankly to Charlotte than to Bertus.

"I need you for my own reasons, I don't know about Bertus, but in the end, it should be the same for him. Right?"

Charlotte probably saw me or even heard me speak to Bertus herself.

"I don't really know what Bertus is thinking, but it's not a bad relationship we're having."

"As long as you are in Temple's Royal Class, Bertus won't do anything to you. You can relax. Strictly speaking, the one you should be careful of would be me, but you know I need you."

Charlotte was a bit different from Bertus in that she spoke to me directly like that.

"I'll be fine as long as I'm in the Royal Class? Why?"

Just because we were classmates?

"As you know, Temple gives us exams and corresponding grades, right?"

"……Yeah?"

"And you also know that there are not only individual exams, but also group exams. There are also classes and activities that require teamwork, which also count in one's evaluation, right?"

"I know."

Of course, I knew.

Class A and Class B would compete against each other, and that was pretty much reflected in these grades. Of course, there had to be fields in which the classes could

compete directly with each other. That way the main character's class, the inferior one, would later on have the pleasure of winning over the superior class.

Although the rationality behind grading everyone as a group was pretty much non-existent, it was a setting I deliberately put in so that there could be a direct competition between the two classes.

"With that in mind, wouldn't it be disadvantageous for him to harm his classmates, badger them or treat some more preferentially when there are such group activities, right?"

"I… guess so."

This wasn't on the same level as someone missing from a sports team, but just by having too few people on one's side would certainly carry a lot of disadvantages.

I made a lot of weird group activities for Class A and B's competition, after all.

In other words, if one were to lose, all our grades would drop.

"So, Bertus won't do anything to me because he doesn't want his grades to drop?"

"Yes. So, unless you go too far over the line, he will most likely leave you alone."

Bertus was smart, but was he really the type to obsess over grades to such a degree?

"This sounds a bit unconvincing… Are grades so important to him?"

"I don't know if they were in the past, but now they are very important to him."

Saying that, Charlotte turned her eyes to me.

Their performance at Temple might not have been that important in the past, but right now it was something incredibly important to both of them. That was why Bertus wouldn't try to kick me down if I didn't do anything beyond reason.

"Do you remember? The Emperor's message that we would be deprived of our right to the throne if something were to happen to either of us?"

"I remember…"

On our first day after entering Temple, the Emperor sent a decree to Temple's Royal Class. It was a message directed to both Charlotte and Bertus, as well as their followers inside the Royal Class, to warn them not to try anything.

Clearly, those two would be unable to harm each other until it was fully settled who would succeed the throne.

The Emperor knew full well how Bertus tried to kill Charlotte. I didn't really know what exactly happened, but the Emperor didn't seem to hold Bertus accountable for this.

However, he wanted to prevent future bloodshed between family members.

He now created a situation in which both Charlotte and Bertus were now desperately trying to keep each other alive, far from trying to kill each other. The current Emperor held so much power that, even if they got harmed unintentionally, he could make some completely unrelated person the Emperor.

That was the situation they were in.

"Then, taking this situation into consideration, do you think our evaluation at Temple would matter now, or not?"

"!"

Even if Temple was the best educational institution on the continent, it was completely absurd to assume that the one who graduated with better grades would become the Emperor. This wasn't a matter one could decide using their grades.

However, even if it wouldn't be the only factor leading to a decision, it would most certainly still play a big part.

Bertus and Charlotte were even in the same grade.

So this would be a type of indicator who between those two would be superior.

And Temple didn't only give grades for individual strength as well.

In many cases, one had to achieve certain feats through teamwork. Whether it was group tasks or group activities.

The grades in Temple were bound to have some impact on the throne succession. There was no doubt that they had a significant, if not absolute, effect on that decision.

“Meaning, if even one person was missing, it would be a huge loss.”

“I see…”

If they were even one person short in a group activity, it would be a great disadvantage. Therefore, Bertus wouldn’t do any direct harm to me. That was what Charlotte was getting at.

Only then did I understand why Bertus took the initiative in discouraging the others from taking leaves of absence. If two kids decided to leave we would be down to only 9. Two less than Class B. Appealing, that evaluating the group activities like this was unfair, would be useless as well. Bertus had to somehow outperform Class B.

In usual times, his performance at Temple wouldn’t be so important to him, but now it was very important.

That being said, it was, of course, just as important to Charlotte.

“Was it intentional then? That the two of you got put into Class A and B respectively?”

“Well… I can’t say that it wasn’t now, can I?”

I still didn’t know what kind of supernatural power Charlotte held, but it was pretty clear that the two of them got put into different Classes and placed as Number 1. Both were in the class leader position. They were ultimately put into such a position to test their leadership skills on their classmates.

In the end, what Charlotte wanted to convey was that I didn’t have to fear Bertus too much.

And it also made sense that I didn’t have to be afraid of Charlotte as well, because she needed me for her own reasons.

Then there was a different matter that bothered me.

“By the way, wasn’t it a bit harsh… putting you in Class B?”

The Classes were divided by talent. Class B corresponded to the inferior Class. Wasn’t Charlotte dissatisfied with that treatment?

Charlotte shrugged her shoulders.

“I think this was better for me, though?”

“Ah… I know what you mean.”

The honor student’s dilemma also applied here.

It went without saying that Class A far outperformed Class B.

However, if Class B were to surpass Class A even once, then it would seem like Class B created a miracle.

Charlotte seemed to think that Class B was currently in a pretty low position but could rise higher. However, although the story won’t play out like in the original, in the story I wrote, Class B would end up outperforming Class A.

“Anyway, aren’t you telling me a bit too much. I’m still a member of Class A.”

“Do you think? Even Bertus knows this much, though.”

Charlotte smiled, as if her telling me this much wouldn’t pose a big problem to her.

“Okay. No more chit-chat.”

We arrived at the Aligar District shopping street. A place where many adventurers met their financial end even today.

“The last place the boy I was looking for was seen was in this shopping street.”

Charlotte came here to look for traces of Valier.

“Huh… Really?”

With Valier standing right next to her.

CHAPTER 82

There was a reason why Charlotte had to take me with her.

“Tell me if you feel something.”

“Ah… I don’t really know if anything like that will happen though.”

She didn’t know what kind of miracles my supernatural power could work, so she brought me here on a whim. Maybe I would be able to give her a clue about Valier’s whereabouts if I visit the place he was last seen. That was probably what she was thinking.

Charlotte probably already had all the information she could get out of this place.

However, there still seemed things she wanted to check out personally, and she thought, if she brought me, things might change, so that led to this situation.

“Have you ever seen someone that looks like this?”

Charlotte wandered around, carrying Valier’s portrait, and began questioning people. I was pretty sure that she already went around the scroll shops, but Charlotte still went ahead and wandered around the shopping street asking passers-by.

Have you seen him? If you have, do you know where he went?

Of course, this was still the Aligar District shopping street. A place where you’d earn hatred if you didn’t spend any money.

“What are you brats doing here? You can’t look around. Scram.”

Charlotte was wearing a robe, but she was still very small, so one could see her as anything but a minor. I couldn’t see her as an adventurer either.

Neither did the person in front of her. He didn’t even allow us to take a look.

How very gangster-like.

He let some choice words fly our way, saying stuff about some kids just wandering in willy-nilly without even buying anything. He even asked us if we were crazy.

He sure had some fragrant words to offer. So fragrant that he'd immediately bite his tongue off if he knew he was directing them to the First Imperial Princess.

In that case, we should have just worn our Temple Uniforms, not our casual clothes. That way they'd think there was big money to earn from us.

"…I knew it was going to be tough, but there are a lot of people who don't even want to listen to what I have to say."

After walking around the place for quite some time and getting pushed out of store doors, she was obviously tired. Charlotte let out a sigh.

"……I feel like the point you're focusing on is kind of wrong. Aren't you supposed to get pissed off by commoners treating you like that?"

Charlotte did grumble a bit after she got kicked out and treated the way she was, but she didn't seem angry. Hearing my words, Charlotte laughed helplessly.

"He swore at me while I was in disguise. Wouldn't it be really weird if I suddenly said something like 'You peasant! Do you know who you are talking to'?"

She was intentionally hiding her identity, so Charlotte seemed fully prepared for what kind of treatment she'd receive when no one was able to recognize her as the Princess. It seemed like what was important for her at the moment wasn't her honor or pride.

When I witnessed Charlotte getting back up on her own feet, I could feel just how desperate she was.

"Can you sense anything?"

"……No."

"As I thought…"

As if she didn't expect much from this, Charlotte didn't seem very disappointed.

“Let’s go.”

However, she didn’t seem to have any intention to give up just yet.

* * *

The only place one could get any information was at the scroll shops. Fortunately, not everyone was slamming their doors in our faces.

“Just who is that brat that everyone’s looking for ‘im? Did that brat cause some incident with those fake scrolls of his?”

The Scroll Store owners who remembered me generally reacted like that. A boy who came to them to sell some fake scrolls, and that group of people who were rushing about looking for him ever since then.

They seemed to think that I got involved in some huge crime.

“People who looked like Guards just came around askin bout ‘im, and now some kids like you are after ‘im as well.”

The store owner seemed to find this situation very strange, saying that everyone suddenly started looking for that boy.

“I can’t tell you why we are looking for him, but it’s very important. Could you tell me everything you know about him?”

“There’s nothin’ much to it. A few months ago, a young boy came here tryin to sell some scrolls. Although they were very well-made, they were very shoddy. So I thought he was tryin to sell me fake scrolls. In the end I kicked him out. That’s all.”

“Okay… Thank you.”

“Sigh, that brat must have gotten into some serious trouble. That’s why people should earn their money through honest means. You should be mindful of that as well.”

The shopkeeper came forward and gave Charlotte a warning, then we left the store without saying a word.

“Sigh… In the end, they only told me things I already knew. Nothing changed.”

Even if one went to investigate and question the same witnesses personally, it was only natural that their testimony wouldn’t be any different from what was written in the reports.

“What did they mean by fake scrolls?”

Of course, I wouldn’t know why Charlotte was wandering around in this place and why Valier even came here with my current presumed level of knowledge. Charlotte looked at me from inside her robe and opened her mouth slightly.

“I told you that this boy escaped with me from the Demon King’s Castle, right?”

“You said, he saved your life…”

“I can’t tell you everything, but this boy had his reasons for separating from me.”

Because of the possible retaliation from Bertus, Valier fled. That’s what Charlotte believed to be the reason. Of course, she didn’t know that I actually ran from her because I was a demon.

“But what can a kid with amnesia and no proper knowledge do? He ran away recklessly, so the future seemed rather bleak at first. But he had some magic scrolls from the Demon King’s Castle. Perhaps that’s why he tried to raise some funds by selling them to the Scroll Shop owners on the Aligar District’s shopping street.”

Charlotte deduced the truth from only these bits of information. A boy who sold fake scrolls. From that, Charlotte might have concluded that those fake scrolls were actually demon scrolls, and that boy would be Valier without a doubt.

“However, the structure of demonic scrolls are vastly different from the scrolls we use. Merchants who have no magician-background would probably think he was trying to mess with them, trying to sell them fake scrolls.”

“Ah… Is that so?”

Demon scrolls and the one’s humans used had structural differences. Without that knowledge I ignorantly wandered in every scroll shop and tried to sell them before I finally met Eleris.

“I don’t know whether he felt like something was wrong and realized that he wouldn’t be able to sell the demonic scrolls, but I heard he took a Fireball scroll from one of the stores to sell. That isn’t the weird part however. There were eyewitness testimonies that stated that he took a Fireball scroll, but no one ever bought one around that time.”

Eleris falsified her testimony, so that was where the trace got cut off.

“Maybe he stole it, got scared and simply ran away.”

“That’s possible. Then I would have to investigate shopping streets located in different places…”

Charlotte nodded her head after listening to my intentionally misleading comment.

“Let’s go to the store from where he stole the Fireball scroll.”

Of course, I didn’t actually steal it. That guy handed it over willingly, but I couldn’t correct her on this point.

Charlotte walked ahead to lead the way. That must have been information she had already been aware of, so did she really think that she would get any different results just because she decided to investigate herself?

* * *

Like that we arrived at the shop of this guy who gave me that Fireball scroll, blinded by greed.

-Squeak

I never thought I’d ever return to this place.

“……What? What do you kids want?”

Eleris told me this shop owner’s name, but I couldn’t remember it. He still looked as grumpy and greedy as before though. Charlotte took the lead and walked towards the counter.

“Are you Mr. Borton?”

"……Yeah, so what?"

When she called out the guy's name, he seemed slightly surprised. Charlotte seemed to have compiled almost every piece of information about him prior to this.

"You reported that someone stole a Fireball scroll from you the other day, is that correct?"

"……What? You're asking about this again? I told those Guards everything I had to say. Are they even having kids look into this now?"

It seemed like he was sick and tired of talking about this incident, as if he constantly had to repeat the story.

"I'm sorry to ask about this again. Still, this is very important to us, so we're still looking into it. Could you tell me what happened back then one more time?"

Rather than pushing her point in an authoritarian way, Charlotte asked him politely.

"If I were to catch the guy, I was told that I would get lots of money in addition to my Fireball scroll, but I haven't even found a single hair of him, so what does it matter? Just what kind of incident did that brat cause?"

That scammy merchant seemed almost convinced that the reason for so many people digging up information on me was that I got involved in some big incident.

"I can't divulge such information. It's classified."

"You want me to tell you everything, while not giving me even a bit of information?"

Borton smiled as if what we asked for was absurd.

"Fine. I won't get any rest anyway before I get that brat in my fingers."

He was talking as if he held a deep grudge against the one who stole his precious Fireball scroll. Watching that greedy bastard getting angry in front of me made my blood pressure rise through the roof.

Normally I would have flipped the table right that moment, but I would get into some pretty serious trouble if I were to step up now, so I just clenched my fists and tried to

endure it. He explained the situation, his face contorted by anger as he thought back to that time.

“So a couple of months ago or so, some well-young brat came to me with a scroll book and tried to sell it to me. However, they were all just really well-drawn fake scrolls. So I asked him, “Why are you trying to sell that shit? Get out of here!”, but when I kicked him out, he swiped a Fireball scroll. I was so angry when I found out later on. I tried to sniff him out, but it was useless. That’s it. Then there were a ton of people rushing around to catch that bastard. Who knows what kind of accident he caused.”

It was quite an arbitrary explanation. And the part where he handed me the scroll himself was drastically changed to me having swindled him.

“But what leads would you even gain from this? That guy might as well have disappeared into thin air or burrowed deep into the ground. I don’t even know his name.”

Borton sighed, thinking that no one would be able to find someone just based on such an eyewitness account. It seemed like he still spent restless nights thinking about the money he lost. Charlotte looked at Borton and smiled from within her robe.

“We definitely gained some leads from this.”

“From this?”

“Of course.”

Charlotte looked around the store, not at Borton himself.

“I’ve already found one, you know?”

Charlotte already noticed something that wasn’t in the report.

“What? What do you mean?”

Borton’s expression turned sickly pale when Charlotte suddenly said that she already found a lead.

As if not noticing his state of mind at all, she pulled out a scroll from under her robe.

“I’ll give you this scroll for a quarter of the regular price.”

“What?”

“It’s not fake. Please confirm.”

When that little girl suddenly took out a magic scroll and showed it to him, Borton laid it out on the counter and looked at it, a smirk evident on his lips.

“……Lightning Scroll… It’s genuine. The market price for this scroll is 1 gold, so a quarter of it would be 25 silver.”

“You can buy it or not, it’s up to you.”

Charlotte mentioned that 1 gold was the correct price, so she didn’t have anything to complain about, so Borton handed her 25 silver as if they were candy. It wasn’t exactly a lead, but we could see that he was extremely elated having been handed something basically for free.

After receiving the silver coins, Charlotte smiled.

“Now then, during this whole process, when would I have had the opportunity to steal your scrolls?”

“……What?”

“You don’t have an appraising machine somewhere in the back, and it seems like you’re able to directly appraise if the scroll is fake or not at the counter. You said as soon as you noticed that the scroll the boy handed to you was fake you kicked him out. Please remind me. Just how did he manage to steal a Fireball scroll from the scroll cabinet behind you?”

Charlotte pointed to the big cabinet behind Borton. It was placed in a way that guests wouldn’t be able to access it.

If Valier showed him the scroll and Borton had to take it to the back to appraise it, he would have had the opportunity to secretly steal a Fireball scroll.

However, to stop the shop owner from sprouting such excuses Charlotte deliberately sold him a scroll at a very low price and watched how that transaction would proceed.

From the start, Charlotte was trying to see if it was even possible for someone to steal a scroll or not, taking the store's structure into consideration.

Charlotte laughed, with her head slightly tilted.

"It's absolutely impossible that he took a Fireball scroll like that. You're hiding something. Out with it."

Charlotte saw through Borton's lie and completely cut off any form of excuse.

"Wha, what are you saying?! If I tell you he swiped it, he swiped it, you little bitch…"

His face swelled, confronted with this absurdity and he tried to step out from behind the counter.

"Hey, you idiot, watch what you say."

"What?"

It was me who spoke up, not Charlotte, who was still wearing a robe. The fact that she didn't reveal her identity seemed to mean that she didn't want to pressure him using her authority.

"I'm a student of Temple's Royal Class. If you don't want this to get bloody, keep talking, you hear?"

Since Charlotte didn't want to reveal her identity, I just revealed mine. Be thankful, you bastard. If I hadn't stepped up you might have gotten exiled or worse.

"Te, Temple…?"

I waved my student ID right in front of his face, and I could see that he was slightly pissed off by being talked to like this by some young bastard.

"Yeah, Temple. You'd lose no matter what you'd do anyway, but are you sure you're even capable of beating me up? Well, I'm pretty dang sure that I can hand your ass to

you in a fight, no matter what. So, how about it? If you have the confidence to put a scratch on me, come at me."

As I muttered these words with a threatening force behind them, the store owner seemed to struggle between his feelings of indignation after being looked down on by a young boy and not wanting to get into trouble by laying hand on a Temple student. Charlotte seemed a little surprised. She didn't seem to have expected that I would interfere like this.

Anyway, Charlotte already saw through Borton's lies. She would have found out the truth sooner or later. Assuming that to be the case, I'd rather get myself involved and show Charlotte my good side.

"If he stole it, you'd surely know how he did it, right? If you can't even do that, just spit out what you're hiding."

I would most certainly appear much more intimidating than Charlotte, who covered her face. When I stepped up, Charlotte fell into silence as if she planned on just watching from the sidelines.

More than anything, I just couldn't stand that bastard talk for even a second longer.

"Don't you get that this isn't just your run-of-the-mill case? You're gonna be accused of obstruction of justice by spreading misleading information, you know? Are you gonna tell the truth now, or would you rather have someone you don't know drag you to some dank basement and beat the shit out of you?"

I had no idea what kind of expression Charlotte made, hearing these ridiculous, threatening statements I made. It wasn't like I could control Charlotte's and Bertus' forces.

These were just a list of scary words meant to get a reaction out of someone.

Misleading information. Obstruction of justice. Getting kidnapped.

If people hear these types of words lined up in a sentence, they'd rather swallow swords than gambling on the option that these were just empty threats.

I mean, it's just simple blackmail backed by empty threats. I didn't have a shred of authority to do anything like that after all.

“Tha, that’s… That is…”

However, it was difficult to think of this as just simple blackmail from Borton’s standpoint.

I had no intention of backing down either.

When I saw him like that, I really wanted to see this bastard getting severely punished.

CHAPTER 83

Borton eventually confessed.

"…So you gave it to him?"

"Ye, yes…"

However, he didn't confess completely, but as defensively as possible. He said that he wasn't robbed, in fact, he just gave it to him.

"Why would you just give him a Fireball scroll?"

"We, well, the guy tried to sell fake scrolls like that, so I just gave him a real one out of pity!"

"……Why are you telling us such a nonsensical lie? Didn't you call him a thief first? But now you're telling us you gave him the scroll because you felt sorry for him?"

"Y, yes! I just gave it to him!"

Charlotte had an incredulous look in her eyes, as if questioning that dude's intelligence. Although I had similar thoughts the moment he gave me the Fireball scroll, but that guy sure was seriously stupid and shameless.

In the end, I got annoyed.

It wasn't difficult for someone like Charlotte to completely break this guy's lies, but he just kept on sprouting new lies.

"Hey, you bastard, do you think we're stupid? You probably just thought the guy was great at drawing fake scrolls, so you planned on making him draw more fake scrolls for you! You probably gave him the scroll and told him to copy that one. However, a few days after you gave it to him, you realized he took off with it. That's what happened, right?!"

In the end, I couldn't bear with it anymore, and blurted out the truth I knew.

“Indeed. That’s what I’m thinking as well.”

She didn’t seem too surprised by my reasoning, as if Charlotte already guessed as much. Borton’s complexion grew perplexed when he was completely exposed.

“No, that’s not it! D, do you have evidence? Are you just making people out to be scammers without proper evidence?! What did I even do!? I’m the one who lost a Fireball scroll here! I lost money!”

“Sigh…”

Charlotte sighed.

“Hey, Mr. Borton. The Imperial Law does not punish those with the intent to commit a crime. You’re not scamming anyone because you didn’t actually sell fake scrolls yet, even if you were planning on doing that, although this is quite the moral issue it’s not a legal one. I just want to know the truth. So this kid didn’t steal the Fireball scroll. That’s it, right?”

After Charlotte spoke to him in a very mature way, Borton started to regain his composure again.

“That’s… Fine. You’re right. He didn’t steal it. Well… Anyway, I gave it to him myself. That’s the truth.”

In the end, he still refused to admit that he was trying to scam people by selling mass-produced fake scrolls. Although I wasn’t able to see Charlotte’s expression, it was quite obvious that she disliked the person in front of her to a great extent.

Then, as if her business with this place was over, Charlotte turned on her heels and left the store.

“I, I’m telling the truth! I just gave it to him!”

He pleaded his innocence until the very end, but Charlotte didn’t respond to him anymore.

The two of us went back out, standing on the Aligar shopping street, illuminated by the setting sun. Charlotte let out a deep sigh while covering her face with her hands.

“Siiiigh…”

“…Are you angry?”

“Just what was wrong with that person’s head?”

Charlotte was so angry that her face was completely red.

“Uurg… Uuuuurrg!”

Charlotte trembled, seeming like she was trying to contain her anger.

She seemed so mad, however, I felt a little apologetic to her, because I thought she looked pretty cute like that. Charlotte got so angry. So angry, in fact, that she grabbed me, looked me straight in the eyes and started to talk.

“Seriously. How could he tell such a stupid lie without even flinching? Did he think I’m dumb? Huh? Did he really think I’d believe that? Just what’s with this?”

It seemed like Charlotte was most angry at that brazenness to just go with such a stupid lie, rather than Borton’s lack of morality.

“How can a person be so stupid? That’s why the Empire needs to start a public education system as soon as possible! That way, there won’t be any more stupid people like that idiot, right?”

What? Hey, wasn’t she throwing a fit over something pretty weird?

The reason idiots like that exist is because there’s no public education.

Was that it? So, in the end, did she feel like it was the responsibility of the Empire to educate people, so she blew her top? Was that why she seemed to feel ashamed and angry every time she saw people like that?

“Y, you really have a unique point of view, in many ways, yeah…”

She was the Imperial Princess. Her way of thinking was completely different from that of a criminal’s.

Even if public education was properly implemented, I couldn’t agree with her

opinion, because the world I lived in, which had such public education, was filled with similar idiots.

“B, by the way… How bout trying to calm down?””

“Huh? Ah…… Ah. I’m sorry.”

She was so excited and spoke with such enthusiasm that she didn’t notice that she was only inches away from my face. It almost seemed like she was attacking me. It was rather difficult for me to understand someone who got angry at people for not being too bright instead of doing something morally wrong.

After a while, Charlotte calmed down, taking a few deep breaths.

“Okay… I did find it a little strange that he would steal something. So that is one problem solved.”

Charlotte seemed to have held some suspicions after reading in the report that I stole the Fireball scroll. So in the end, she seemed quite satisfied by finding out the truth behind this matter.

“By the way, Reinhardt, you are quite amazing as well.”

“Me?”

“When you were pressuring him.”

It seemed like she was talking about the part where I tried to blackmail him to get him to tell the truth. Charlotte smiled at me.

“You must have a lot of experience, right?”

I sighed at that sinister smile.

“It’s not like I haven’t done this kind of thing before, but not that often, you hear?”

More than anything, I only stepped up and sprouted some nonsensical bullshit because I got extremely annoyed by that bastard.

“There’s nothing wrong with knowing how to do something like that. I enjoyed it.”

“I don’t know if I should take you telling me I’m good at blackmailing as a compliment or criticism. Thanks, I guess.”

It seemed like Charlotte revised her evaluation of me once again. Then she pointed to one of the stalls lining the streets.

“Let’s eat something to cleanse our minds.”

She jingled the bag of silver coins she received for that Lighting scroll she just sold while saying that.

“For the day to have come where the Imperial Princess would actually treat me to street food. I feel so honored.”

At my expression of gratitude, Charlotte gave me a slight look. Although I was taller than her, I could clearly see Charlotte’s face hidden by her robe.

“…I heard that you are quite disrespectful towards Bertus.”

“To be exact, what you should have heard is that I’m extremely rude.”

“……It’s quite the sight.”

Charlotte said that I was quite the strange person. On one hand, I was someone very wary of both the Prince and Princess, on the other hand, however, not in the slightest.

“If you hadn’t come to Temple, wouldn’t you have died several times already?”

Charlotte told me that I would have had quite the early death if I lived as a normal commoner. They did have the principle of treating every student as equals, but no matter how one looked at it, I was going far beyond just being blunt.

“That’s why I think you’d get into serious trouble the day you graduate from Temple. Have you considered being held back indefinitely?”

“If I want to live even a day longer, I might have to do that.”

Charlotte burst into laughter, saying that that might be the case.

* * *

Charlotte and I bought food similar to churros from a stall near the shopping street and ate them. It was a long piece of bread dipped into sugar. It looked like churros, but it tasted like twisted breadsticks.

No matter how one thought about it, sugar was quite the rare commodity in medieval times. What the hell? Although, I gave up thinking about that when I saw the other vendors selling candy.

Right.

A medieval Fantasy has nothing to do with the medieval times!

Anyway, that's just how it is! Yeah!

"By the way… Me saying that might be quite useless, but you're a princess, so why are you eating stuff sold on the street?"

These types of food had very little nutritional value and were often undercooked. It wasn't like I really wanted to eat this, but I was really surprised at how casually she just bought and ate this. She even asked to eat this herself.

Charlotte smiled strangely at my words.

"Actually, I was a really picky eater in the past."

"……Really?"

"I know what you're thinking, and I was exactly like you are imaging."

The type who'd absolutely hate street food or any kind of low-quality food. It was even more interesting because Charlotte said that she WAS like that in the past, but not anymore. She didn't look like that type at all.

In situations such as these, I realized how prejudiced I was.

No matter how kind he looked, Bertus was still a type of villain.

Charlotte didn't seem like a bad or mean person at all. She probably only acted that

way because she had some reasons. I was like that as well.

That is what one would call the law of the first impression.

In that regard, I was probably the strangest person here.

"If a person was close to dying of thirst with no water anywhere near them, they would even lick up the stagnant dirty water gathering on the floor. Not to mention when someone is close to dying of starvation. They would even eat a leather shoe."

Charlotte looked at me and smiled. It wasn't a happy smile, but a grimace she pulled because she was unable to cry.

"Ah……"

I couldn't find the right words to say to Charlotte, whose face was pulled into such a grimace.

"After humans are about to reach their end, all of us become the same. Noble or commoner, in the end we all are just the same."

Faced with the absolute desire for survival, she found the mask she had worn all her life and that pride she had about her completely insignificant. She also realized that she wasn't any different from other people, either.

"Do you know what the scariest part was? It wasn't the torture, the threats and curses they hurled at me or having to look at their backs."

I watched Charlotte, who was wearing an exceedingly dark expression on her face, as she stared at the churros she was eating a while ago.

"There were people who ate each other because they couldn't take it anymore. And after they ate, they went crazy, shocked at the very fact that they did something so terrible."

Charlotte looked at me.

"It wasn't the demons. The humans were the scariest."

What she feared most were the humans.

“The fact that the people around me became like that also meant that I could turn out like that as well. That was the most terrifying thing to me.”

Because she might become like them, Charlotte didn’t fear the demons as much as she did these broken humans. She wasn’t sure how she’d turn out when she was completely at her wits end.

“That… was so terrifying and frightening that I thought I was going crazy… No, I probably already went crazy…”

I could clearly remember it.

At the time I found her, Charlotte was crying while holding a certain someone’s body.

Charlotte didn’t go into any more detail. However, since I could remember what Charlotte was like back then, I could tell what Charlotte meant.

She was cradling that body.

She seemed to be in excruciating pain.

“At that time, a certain boy came to me. Other than me, there was one more child that survived… I couldn’t believe it, but he appeared right in front of my eyes.”

When Charlotte’s tears were just rolling down from her dead eyes, unable to even cry properly anymore, I appeared in front of her.

The only other survivor besides her.

“He gave me the only food he was able to find. He didn’t even think of taking it for himself.”

It was only a biscuit.

It was much too little to fill one’s stomach.

“Thanks to that boy, I was able to remain as a human… No, I had already gone half-crazy at that point… I was finally able to let my sanity resurface…”

He was a boy who freely handed over the food he should have been so desperate for

as well.

He was the only other survivor except herself.

At that time, Charlotte seemed relieved by my very existence. It seemed like she was touched just by knowing that she wasn't the only one left.

Knowing that all of this was nothing more than a dirty lie, I was hardly able to look Charlotte in the eyes.

Charlotte said some heavy things, so she ended up laughing somewhat exaggeratedly.

"After that, I never complained about food again."

"Hmm… After that, whatever you ate tasted delicious… Something like that?"

Charlotte shook her head.

"After that, I just realized that nothing would be more delicious than that biscuit I had back then. Whatever I put into my mouth, it just tastes so-so."

She didn't become grateful for the food that she could eat freely after that.

Knowing that nothing she would eat for the rest of her life would taste as divinely as that biscuit she had eaten after almost starving to death. That was why Charlotte stopped being a fussy eater.

No matter what she ate, it just tasted bland, so it didn't matter what she ate.

"……Isn't that kinda pessimistic?"

"Isn't it much better that I became a pessimistic person instead of a crazy one?"

Charlotte frowned slightly while smiling. It was a bit sad to hear that it was already good enough that she hadn't gone completely crazy in that situation.

However, Charlotte's smile was so beautiful that I forgot to breathe for a short while.

"Why do you keep telling me things, I shouldn't hear? Let's just keep it at that. I

wouldn't be surprised if you suddenly told me something like: "Now that I told you this, you have to die"."

To be honest, we weren't actually that close right now! Of course, it certainly seemed like she opened her heart to me to some extent, but wasn't she rushing a bit here?

Did she want to talk to someone about this, but didn't have anyone she could actually turn to? So what was the point of grabbing me of all people and complaining to me?

Charlotte laughed at my words.

"Aren't you smart? Yeah, I need you to die now."

"I'm going now. Bye. Sorry for being rude."

I jumped up from my seat without hesitation, but Charlotte grabbed the hem of my clothes.

"Hey, it was just a joke!"

Charlotte seemed to be having fun teasing me like that.

CHAPTER 84

"... By the way, you didn't even eat half of those, you know?"

Charlotte muttered as if she found it incredulous that I barely touched my churros.

"I don't like sweet things."

Refined carbs fried in oil and sugar added to it on top? I felt my heart burn just thinking about it.

Why were we eating this?

Of course, I did eat the candy Eleris gave me, but that was it.

At my words, Charlotte opened her mouth slightly as if what I said was ridiculous.

It was as if she was telling me that I was seriously missing out.

"You think it's weirder for a beggar from the streets to not like sweets, than a Princess that eats anything regardless of quality? Am I really that weird?"

A princess who would eat anything no matter what it is.

And a beggar who stopped eating after a single bite simply because he didn't like sweets.

Both of us were pretty rare sights.

To be honest, the Princess had a reason for her behavior. It was a bit harder to explain why I was like this though.

"Well, I'm different from you, Princess. I always had to eat cheap stuff, but now that I get to eat the highest quality food, I realized what it really means to eat. That's how it is."

"……I apologize for asking, but are you truly satisfied?"

“Of course. How could I not be? I get to study in the world’s best education institution and eat the highest quality food.”

“…I have no words.”

Charlotte was completely speechless, looking at me as if I was a weirdo.

“What do you like to eat then?”

“Something like hot meat stew.”

Charlotte’s expression grew more and more bewildered when I told her what I liked.

“……What’s with this? When I talk to you, I sometimes feel like I’m sitting in front of some stubborn minister. The way you talk, your tastes…”

Did she mean I act like a geezer?

Well, to be fair, looking at my mental age and the Princess’, it might feel that way.

“Why thank you. I take it as appearing mature then.”

“Maturity isn’t always a good thing though.”

I clearly understood that what she meant wasn’t that I was actually mature. She was being sarcastic. After that I forcibly stuffed the rest of the churros into my mouth.

“…What? Didn’t you say you didn’t like sweets? Why are you eating it all of a sudden now?”

After forcing down that terribly sweet thing, I mumbled something.

“Throwing away the gift the Princess gave me, would be a waste though, right?”

I didn’t know what Charlotte would think of me if I threw away the thing she gifted me. Well there was nothing good about wasting food anyway.

Of course, it wasn’t that important to me that a Princess bought it for me, but that Charlotte bought it for me.

"…It's truly ridiculous that you care about these types of things."

It seemed like Charlotte was on the verge of giving up trying to understand me. It looked like she doubted whether I was conscious of my actions or not.

Our brief break was over.

We sat on a bench and kept on watching people passing by.

"It seems like there are some things you have to experience yourself to come to a proper conclusion."

"Uhm, Well… Seems to be the case today."

Charlotte sighed heavily.

Apparently, Charlotte had someone search through the Aligar District's shopping street. However, he failed to uncover the truth behind the scroll robbery.

"I knew my people were only capable of doing what I told them to do, so this could be called a harvest in it's own way."

They only do what they are told to do.

I didn't think she meant that in a good way, but in the end, just by getting to know that her people lacked a certain something, Charlotte seemed to judge this as a big harvest.

It wasn't anything difficult to find out, but they took that testimony at face value and only reported its contents to Charlotte. They never even questioned the credibility of this information.

Of course, we were only able to come to this conclusion because I knew the truth, and Charlotte thought fiercely about this incident because she was just that desperate.

If I didn't actually know the truth, I might have dismissed this as well.

"If I asked someone to dig a well, they should know that my intention was to look for water…"

Charlotte seemed disappointed by her subordinates, but she remained firm.

She asked them to investigate Valier's actions on Aligar District's shopping street.

This instruction contained the intention of finding Valier, and here they were just returning with some testimonies. So, they even brought information that lacked credibility to her.

"I was able to find out a lot more just by checking myself."

"What else is there?"

Charlotte stared at me. No, her gaze seemed to ask if I didn't even know that much either.

"In the report I received, the testimonies of the owners and their store names were written down. All testimonies were arranged in a neat document…"

"Well… yeah?"

"However, by coming here myself, I'm able to see everything. The location of the stores, for example… Like this it would only be natural for me to find something."

Charlotte pointed to the other side of the shopping street.

That was where we came from.

"His path."

Those words sent a chill down my spine.

"He came in from over there and went into every scroll shop he saw at least once. He wouldn't have been able to enter the stores we were kicked out of today either. Only the ones that gave testimonies."

Then Charlotte pointed towards the other end of the shopping street.

"And, after that Fireball scroll shop, there were no further eyewitness reports. We don't have to visit these places in person. His movement suddenly ended there."

She found out these things right away.

I knew Charlotte was smart. A lot smarter than I could ever be.

The location of the stores weren't written down in their report.

However, if one were to visit this place themselves one would find out rather quickly.

If one were to connect the store's positions, one could read his movements quite clearly.

"If he stole that Fireball scroll, it would make sense that he stopped. He might have ran away with it to not get caught after all."

"Yeah… I guess."

"But we just found out that this scroll wasn't actually something he stole. So, he wouldn't have had any reason to run away like that."

If he had stolen it, he would have tried to sell the scroll elsewhere outside of the shopping street. Then, it would make complete sense that the trace cut off there.

However, the truth was that he hadn't stolen the scroll. The shop owner actually gave it to him. So, there was no reason for him to run away making his disappearance not as plausible.

"If he wasn't able to sell the demonic scrolls then he would probably have tried to sell that Fireball scroll he got from that shop owner. Either way, he was pressed for money. This leaves us two possibilities. The Fireball scroll store owner lied again… There's the possibility that he hurt the kid himself and is now pretending not to know anything more than he said, but it's probably not possible for that idiot to come up with something like that taking his lacking brain into consideration…"

I felt like my whole body was getting colder and colder.

"Or he went over there. The next store."

Charlotte pointed somewhere.

"There's a very high possibility that his movement ended at the Fireball store or that

place."

It was Eleris' Scroll shop.

Charlotte was able to reach the truth only with her extremely limited amount of information.

* * *

I couldn't let Charlotte enter Eleris' shop.

"Erm… It might not necessarily be that place, right?"

"That's possible. Maybe they actually kicked him out, but didn't remember it."

She didn't seem to be that suspicious of Eleris at the moment.

"But the fact that we didn't have any eyewitness accounts from this part of the street means that there were some people among the shop owners that lied. It's very likely that one of them did something to the boy."

Damn it, I didn't have any good justification. Charlotte was having reasonable doubts, so it was impossible for me to keep her away.

Even if it was somehow possible, Charlotte wouldn't want to leave a single stone unturned. Even if there was only a small chance that she might find traces of Valier, she would try to investigate no matter what.

"He didn't necessarily have to visit another scroll store… Isn't there a possibility that he left because of another reason?"

"Hmm… You're right. As soon as you walk around openly carrying a scroll book, you're already a prime target for pickpockets or other criminals."

Charlotte nodded at my suggestion to not focus too much on the scroll stores. There was still the possibility that he might have gotten pickpocketed or targeted by some criminals after walking around the shopping street with his scroll book for quite a while.

"It's not too late to consider this possibility after we've secured the testimonies of

the next few scroll shops."

The more information, the better.

So, she was willing to keep that possibility in the back of her mind. She planned on checking that option after visiting these scroll shops and finding out if someone among the store owners lied.

In the end, there was absolutely no reason for Charlotte to not go into Eleris' store.

And more importantly.

At the moment, Eleris went to the Edina islands to take care of Airi and the others. It was obvious that she hadn't come back yet.

It was unclear to me whether Eleris' absence was a good or bad thing, however this situation was just too unpredictable.

I'm pretty sure Charlotte wouldn't find out my identity by doing this, but if she were to suspect Eleris in any way, there was a high chance that her identity as a vampire could be brought to light.

I couldn't let that happen.

So, I tried using the Revise function.

Charlotte thinks it's not worth examining Eleris' shop.

[10.000 achievement points are needed to perform this Revision.]

Damn it.

Charlotte's determination to find just a single clue was so strong that it was almost impossible for her to even consider not investigating every nook and cranny of this place. So, the probability of her ignoring this place was abysmally low.

-Rattle! Rattle!

"Hmm… It's locked."

Charlotte tilted her head after she found out that the door to Eleris' store was locked. Eleris hadn't returned yet.

"……It could be their day off today."

"Then why don't we take a look at other places? They have to return to this place some day, right?"

I talked as calmly as possible, pretending nothing was wrong. However, Charlotte was still fixated on this locked door.

It seemed like she was starting to get some doubts, realizing a certain possibility. I could clearly see subtle joy radiating from her face.

Her expression seemed to express that she was finally able to come across a clue she never thought she would ever find.

It was surprising.

Charlotte was able to find out at what place my traces really ceased, with only these insignificant eyewitness testimonies.

Charlotte went straight to the next store, which was a weaponry store, not a scroll store. I thought we would go to the next scroll shop. There was no way this person would have any information.

"……What business do you little kids have here?"

"Does the scroll store next door have a day off today?"

The middle-aged owner with a shaggy beard shook his head and smiled.

Charlotte asked him about the owner next door, not Valier.

"No? Miss Elena seemed to have gone quite far away. She doesn't open her shop these days."

I now knew that Eleris' pseudonym was Elena.

It had been a while since Eleris closed up shop. Of course it was like that, because

she was in a situation in which she couldn't be here after all. This was unexpectedly getting worse and worse.

"Since when has the shop been closed?"

"Hmm… Since last Monday. So right when the Festival started. She might have gone somewhere far away to relax. That's what young people do."

Hearing that, Charlotte had a slightly sullen expression on her face. The owner's reasoning that she might have left for somewhere further away in time of the Festival was quite plausible.

The Festival was now over, but she may have just extended her vacation.

"Is that owner young?"

"She's young and very beautiful. There are a lot of guys gathering around her… No. What am I saying?"

He shook his head, wondering why he even said this. The thing he talked about was obviously something Eleris was greatly troubled by.

"Why are you looking for Elena? If it's a scroll shop, even if I feel sorry for sending Miss Elena's potential customers away, there are quite a few of those around here."

He was talking quite gently, because he thought we were her guests. Obviously, he seemed a lot kinder than the other shopkeepers around here.

"I have my reasons. Do you know when that person named Elena will come back?"

"Hmm… Not really. I don't even know where she went. I mean, she just left without a word."

"Do you know anyone who knows?"

I want them to stop, but I wasn't able to just put a hold to this conversation.

"Well… Miss Elena doesn't even attend the merchants' meetings and although she does get along with everyone, she isn't particularly close with anyone or anything like that. She doesn't even go out with others to eat lunch together. However, people

say she has a very kind heart. That's why it's said that she doesn't have the right constitution to be a merchant or do business…"

She got along well with everyone, but never got really close to anyone. Although she makes a living as a merchant, she wasn't like the other Aligar merchants, who could only survive by scamming others.

Slight doubts turned into suspicion, and that suspicion would soon turn into complete certainty.

She hadn't yet grasped all the details, but it seemed like she got a feeling that this person was very strange.

"Hmhm…"

As if she had made up her mind, Charlotte started to laugh.

"Reinhardt."

"Ah… Huh?"

"Follow me."

Charlotte, leaving the wide-eyed owner behind, dragged me outside and went back to Eleris' store.

"We have to force our way in."

As her suspicions grew closer to certainties, it seemed that Charlotte was ready to make use of any method possible.

From inside her robe blue light emanated from the earring Charlotte was wearing.

There was a reason afterall why she was able to go around all alone.

Charlotte wore some kind of artifact, similar to my Flame of Tuesday. I was pretty sure that this wasn't the only one either.

"Break it."

-Kruuaaak!

With just a short phrase, an explosion rang out from Eleris' shop's door. An invisible shock wave smashed through it.

-Wha, what!

-What's going on!

"You! What are you guys doing!"

The street was drowning in a huge commotion caused by this sudden explosion.

"Let's go in."

Charlotte, however, didn't seem to care about anything else going on around her, and walked through the smashed door without hesitation.

CHAPTER 85

Eleris didn't put any protective magic on her door, so it was easily broken.

However, if she had put some protective magic on it, that in itself could be seen as a piece of evidence. That locked door would have caused trouble no matter if it was able to be broken or not.

The moment this place caught Charlotte's eye it was already over.

This situation was no longer stoppable. I couldn't do something crazy like smacking Charlotte in the back of her head either. Leaving the commotion brewing outside behind, Charlotte entered the shop.

"Hmm… The cabinet is locked"

The scroll cabinets everywhere in this shop were now literally shuttered down. Charlotte went over to the counter and carefully checked over every scroll cabinet.

"There are magic locks installed. Still, everyone uses these though…"

The property of scroll shops were the scrolls themselves. So it was only natural for the cabinets to have magic locks to prevent theft on them. Charlotte tapped on one of the shuttered cabinets that occupied one of the walls.

"Reinhardt, if there were any Fireball scrolls in there, what do you think is the probability of it being the one from that other shop?"

"Well… Pretty low, right?"

"Hm… Right? Although it's quite expensive, it isn't a rare type of scroll. Even if there were any in there, they could simply be up for sale……"

Charlotte knew that even if there was a Fireball scroll in there, it certainly wouldn't make good evidence.

She took a book out of her pocket. It was a scroll book. After flipping through the

pages she immediately pulled out a single scroll.

"Still, it wouldn't be a waste to check. It might contain the demonic scrolls he had with him."

Eleris might have taken the scrolls and killed me. There was a good possibility that she was thinking like that.

It was obvious what kind of magic scroll Charlotte took out. I didn't even have to look at it.

It was probably an Unlock or Dispel type of scroll.The moment Charlotte was about to rip apart the scroll to cast the spell.

"Huh…? No, what is this mess?"

Eleris, who should not be here, appeared on the stairs leading to the upper floor.

"Y, you! Who are you…?"

She was looking at me and Charlotte, who was about to cast Dispel, alternately with a startled look.

She simply asked who we were.

Thanks to these words, I realized that she completely knew what was going on here. I didn't exactly know what happened, but Eleris was back in her shop, and she knew what was going on.

She was pretending not to know me. That was the proof.

"Ah… You were there?"

After some confusion, Charlotte took off her robe.

"My name is Charlotte de Gardias. As the Imperial Princess, there are a few questions I would like to ask you."

Charlotte judged that now wasn't the time for her to continue to hide her identity.

* * *

Ignoring the commotion outside, Eleris appeared quite flustered and immediately bowed her head in front of the Princess.

“F, for her Highness the Imperial Princess would come to a shabby place such as this…”

“I have no intentions of dragging this out any longer than necessary. I would like you to answer some questions.”

After revealing her identity, Charlotte began to speak in a coercive and cold manner. Eleris was certainly acting like a normal commonr of the Empire.

I had no idea in what direction this would lead, but I prayed that this would resolve all this. I fiercely hoped that Eleris prepared a plausible excuse. There was nothing I could do to help at this point.

I didn’t even imagine I'd ever enter this place with Charlotte and even meet Eleris, so my mind was in total chaos at the moment.

“You should know that there are many people looking for a single boy around this area.”

"Yes, I’m aware of that, Your Highness."

“I heard you said you never saw that child. Are you sure of that?”

Charlotte, who completely revealed her identity, still remained somewhat respectful, but as a member of the Imperial Family, she had an attitude that it was only a matter of course that her questions would be answered.

“Yes, Your Highness. I am sure. I’ve never seen a child like that anywhere around here before.”

“Look into my eyes.”

“……Yes?”

“Look into my eyes and tell me.”

As if she was trying to see if Eleris was lying, Charlotte stared into Eleris eyes with a completely blank look. Eleris also struggled to move her head facing Charlotte away.

“Have you really never seen him?”

“Yes. Definitely."

I wondered what she saw in Eleris eyes, as she was clearly lying. Charlotte looked like that at her for a long time, then pointed her chin to a specific place.

“Unlock the scroll cabinet.”

The Fireball scroll.

Charlotte was trying to see if she had any.

I didn’t even know where she placed it. Only Eleris knew. She trembled in fear and soon unlocked the magic lock.

“Please show me your ID.”

“Ah, yes… Here you go."

Charlotte checked the ID Eleris had given her, and soon lost interest, then she went to open the scroll cabinet and began to rummage through it.

While rummaging, Charlotte asked a few more questions.

“Is Count Pergia a decent lord?”

It was a pretty meaningless question. What the hell did she want to achieve by asking something like that?

“Tha, that… Count Pergia… The one in charge of the region is Bishop Rendry. Count Pergia isn’t actually a lord…”

“Oh, is that how it is?”

And, as I heared Eleris’ sudden response, I felt a chill running down my spine.

Charlotte was questioning Eleris about her origins.

I didn't know where it was located, but it seemed like Eleris set up Pergia County as her place of origin.

If Eleris said that Count Pergia was a pretty decent lord, Charlotte would have mentioned that it was actually ruled by Bishop Rendry. It was a trap. If one wasn't from that place, one wouldn't actually know that it was ruled by someone of the church.

If she wasn't actually from that place, there was no way for her to have known such a tidbit, However, Eleris answered correctly.

Charlotte was, of course, aware of such issues within the Empire. Eleris did some preliminary research about that place as well, to be able to answer questions about her supposed place of origin.

Both were rather creepy in my opinion.

As she continued to rummage through the cabinets, Charlotte didn't stop asking questions.

"Are you a wizard?"

"No, Your Highness. But there are tools that I can handle using magic power."

"Hmm, wizards wouldn't have a reason to run a scroll store. However, it's not like there aren't any such cases."

After she was done going through that cabinet, Charlotte looked at it with crossed arms.

"There aren't any Fireball scrolls· · …"

Anyway, it seemed like the Fireball scroll was already disposed of.

"This seems to be quite the unique store. They don't sell any attack magic scrolls whatsoever."

Charlotte noticed a peculiarity that made Eleris' store different from other stores.

“Bring the ledger.”

It seemed like Charlotte wouldn’t find this place until all her suspicions had been proven.

* * *

I realized again how meticulous Eleris was. Regardless whether the business was going well or not, Eleris thoroughly managed her books.

She was placed into the Imperial Capital as a spy of the Demon Realm, but one would never know when she might get discovered. So, it seemed like everything was meticulously prepared so that she wouldn’t leave anything suspicious behind.

“Why aren’t you seelling attack magic scrolls?”

“That… Because attack magic can be easily abused for violent crimes. It would be fine if they were just used against monsters, but I know there are quite a few cases where they aren’t used as intended……”

Eleris kept in mind that the scrolls she sold could be used for crimes. That was why she didn’t sell attack magic scrolls.

That was absolutely something Eleris would do.

However, in the end, this aspect turned into a weakness in a way. Eleris wasn’t as meticulous in that area.

"But aren’t attack magic scrolls in high demand?”

“Yes…”

That was why her business wasn’t doing all that well. It was impossible to find fault with the fact that the merchant herself refused to sell certain things though.

“Hmm…”

After Charlotte looked through the whole ledger, she closed the book.

“It seems like you have nothing to do with the boy I’m looking for.”

Charlotte predicted that the one who recognized the true worth of these demonic scrolls probably took it from the boy and did him in. However, Eleris didn't deal in attack magic scrolls, and according to the people around her, she didn't really have any business sense or drive.

It goes without saying that she wouldn't even consider stealing something from someone else.

So, this made it seem like all doubts had been cleared on that side. However, Charlotte still pointed at the ledger.

"But it seems like you didn't write down the store's maintenance fees here."

"Ah……"

After having taken a look at Eleris' shop, Charlotte seemed to have some more doubts. Having taken a look at Eleris' sales, she must have noticed that they were really little.

"Where do you take the means to maintain this shop? Refusing to sell attack magic scroll's which are in high demand. It seems that you don't have the smallest intentions of making money…"

The maintenance fees are covered by the Rotary gang. However, if Charlotte managed to figure out things up to that point, it was very likely that she'd come to the conclusion that I was entangled in this as well.

I was getting goosebumps.

Would she really manage to do that?

"That… I'm actually losing money…"

Of course, Eleris told her that she was doing business while gnawing away at her own capital. In the end, she chose this simple excuse that was just incapable of doing business. She jumped into the business world half-heartedly, but she was stubborn, so ended up bleeding herself dry.

"And yet you went on vacation during the Victory Festival?"

“Ah… That’s…”

“Where did you go?"

“I just… went camping near the Capital… Then I heard that there was a terrorist attack, so I decided to stay there a little longer and only came back today…”

If she said that she went somewhere using the Warp Gates, one could easily check that by going through the gate usage history, so she probably tried to avoid saying anything about that for that reason.

“Camping… Camping, is it…?”

‘You had a good time, huh?’, was what Charlotte's expression seemed to express.

Why.

It seemed like Charlotte’s feelings towards her were slowly changing, didn’t they?

She seemed to find her truly pitiful.

“I heard that all of the Aligar district merchants were all filthy savages. I don’t believe all of them are like that now.”

As if she never heard of anyone who was willing to go bankrupt for their principles, Charlotte seemed happy in many different ways. It seemed like all her doubts had finally been cleared.

That was what I thought until she pointed towards the stairs.

“Could I go up there?"

Charlotte pointed towards the stairs leading up to the second floor.

* * *

The upper floors were where Eleris lived.

There was only a living room and one other room.

"……It doesn't seem like much of a living room."

Charlotte said so after seeing this minimally furnished room. There was only a single table and some chairs in the room, and a bed with a blanket in the other room.

"That's… because I can't afford more…"

It was true that she lived in great poverty.

It seemed like Charlotte didn't find anything but the reality of someone living in poverty in this barren room. Eleris squeezed herself in and showed Charlotte around while my heart was about to burst from tension.

Actually, these types of rooms were found in many households, but there were some that were actually worse off.

In her kitchen there was just a simple fridge and some cookware

-Rattle

"Hmm…"

Charlotte was now looking through Eleris' fridge, took account of the frozen snacks she had in there and nodded slowly.

Eleris started preparing some food in case she had to give me some. I wasn't sure if fridges were expensive in this world or not, but having it justified her having bought this food, but not having eaten any of it.

At the moment Charlotte thought Eleris to be the prime suspect of causing Valier's disappearance, so she looked through her place, but she was actually investigating the living space of a vampire who infiltrated the Imperial Capital.

If Charlotte was actually suspecting her to be a demon, then she'd be able to find many suspicious things in this place, but she was only looking for traces that could lead to Valier.

Then Charlotte went into the bedroom. All it held was a window near the bed, a blanket draped over the bed, and a wardrobe.

Occasionally, Eleris' and my eyes met to avoid Charlotte's gaze.

'Are you alright?'

'I think so!'

We held such conversations with our eyes. Charlotte kept looking at the bed and then grabbed something.

"Elena."

"Yes, Your Highness."

"This hair. Whose is it?"

"!"

"!"

There, on her bed, was a hair that was clearly blonde. Completely different from Eleris' red-brown hair.

When I hid my horns and took on my human form, my hair turned blonde. And the hair Charlotte picked up was exactly the same blonde tone.

That was obviously my hair. I was here at the start of the Festival for a few days.

Charlotte probably would mistake that hair for Valier's hair.

That's right! My hair was my hair. That much was obvious!

However, would it still be my hair if it fell from the head of another me? Not Valier's hair, but Reinhardt's hair?

I, in the first place, why did that hair even fall out? No, well, one usually loses one or two hairs, right? It just naturally happened when one slept.

It was fine as long as it wasn't black! No, how could it even turn black? I was blonde like this after all.

I clenched my fists and held back the desire to immediately check how many hairs were missing from my head.

“I asked whose hair this is.”

Of course, Charlotte, who had a view completely different from me on this, began to question Eleris again.

Eleris’ face was already getting red. For the day to come where I got to see a vampire’s face turning completely red. Did vampires actually have that much blood in them?

Charlotte was questioning her on this hair that was obviously from someone else.

“Tha, that’s… M, my… My. Bo… Boyfriend’s… It… It, seems…”

What else could Eleris say to that other than this?

“Gasp!”

Charlotte freaked out and immediately let go of that piece of hair.

“Tha, that’s… I see…”

“Yes… Your Highness…”

As Charlotte was still rather young, she seemed to have pretty low tolerance to these kinds of things. Both Eleris and Charlotte had tomato red heads for varying reasons. Charlotte couldn’t even look at Eleris’ bed again, as if she just saw something she shouldn’t have.

That little kid. What was she imagining, that she couldn’t even lift her head because it turned so red? Huh?

“Tha, that… Boyfriend… What’s his name?”

Of course, Charlotte still continued her interrogation even though she felt such shame.

At that moment, I thought that she was pretty great in many different ways.

CHAPTER 86

Eleris quickly came up with her ‘boyfriend’s’ personal information in detail. She came up with something so fast that I almost thought that fake boyfriend was actually a real person.

No, this might be the personal information of an actual person. There was a high possibility that Charlotte would run a background check on him after all.

Finally.

She was indeed a bit strange, but Eleris seemed to have been cleared of all her charges.

That was how Charlotte seemed to judge her at least. There was no evidence after all. She only had a suspicion, but there was no physical evidence to support said suspicion.

What would have happened if Eleris wasn’t here?

There was no evidence in the scroll cabinets, but there was this blonde hair she could presume to have fallen off Valier's head on her bed.

Charlotte would have persistently dug up information on Eleris just by finding some circumstantial evidence alone.

“……For the door repair fee.”

Charlotte handed two gold coins to Eleris.

“Tha, thank you , your Highness…”

It was probably a much larger amount than required to repair the door.

“Then excuse us, Miss Elena.”

Charlotte decided to leave the shop, probably because she didn’t have anything more

to ask Eleris. Before leaving, Eleris' and my eyes met.

"……"

"……"

We spoke no words with each other, but it felt like we conveyed a lot of things.

* * *

After we went back onto the street and walked for some time, she suddenly stopped.

"No matter how much I think about it, it's very suspicious."

It seemed like Charlotte still hadn't put her doubts aside. She dragged me into an alley and stared at me.

"Then… Do you think that her testimony was all a lie?"

"Even if she has nothing to do with his disappearance, she, as a person, is just too suspicious."

At these words, I felt like my head completely froze over. I thought Charlotte didn't care about anything else, but Valier. I was wrong.

"Attack magic scrolls are the most sought after among a scroll shop's products. However, she doesn't sell any, because there's a possibility that they could be used to commit a crime? Meaning that she never had the intention of running a proper business in the first place, right? More like, she has no interest at all. I looked at her ledgers and she wouldn't be able to even pay the rent with the measly amount she makes. And yet, judging by her records, she's been running this store for about 2 years now. That would mean that she was able to continue her business without making any proper sales for these 2 years."

That was suspicious.

A scroll store that didn't sell attack magic scrolls.

Even though she made nearly no sales at all, she was somehow able to maintain her store. Doing business didn't seem to be her purpose at all.

“And the rooms upstairs. Putting the thing with the hair aside, there were only a few household items.”

“That’s… right.”

Regardless whether she was involved in Valier’s disappearance or not, Charlotte had already marked Eleris as a very suspicious person.

“No matter if the owner is there or not, what did she even do in these rooms? One can’t even see that someone actually lived there."

Another suspicious point.

The rooms seemed rather sterile. One couldn’t tell at all what type of life she lived in there. It wasn’t strange to call Eleris’ apartment, which was completely void of a sense of being lived in, totally empty.

Leaving the problem with Valier aside, it seemed like Charlotte came to the conclusion that the shop owner called Elena should be thoroughly investigated as she was highly suspicious.

What should I do if the thought that Eleris might be a demon spy came across her mind? Of course, Eleris would be able to escape on her own, but that would mean that I wouldn’t be able to see her in the Capital ever again.

I had to do something.

Whether I muddy the water or not, I wasn’t the one who was in immediate danger, but Eleris.

She already became convinced that the store was just a front and that she actually had a different goal.

And, in order to prove that conviction, Charlotte will absolutely investigate every aspect of Eleris using all her might.

It was only a matter of time before she realized that Eleris was a demon.

“Charlotte, don't get me wrong here. Just listen.”

If that was the case, then it might be the better course of action to stop Charlotte's train of thoughts by telling her some of the truth on my part.

"I think we should stop here."

This became too big a deal.

* * *

We should stop here.

Charlotte furrowed her eyebrows hearing these words, as if I was talking nonsense.

"Stop? What do you mean?"

She finally was able to find a clue, so she, quite understandably, wore an expression as if she couldn't understand why we should stop now.

It wasn't the most conclusive evidence, but anyone could see that this situation was suspicious. Charlotte thought, if she dug up anything about Eleris, she would be able to find Valier.

"As you said, this person is running this shop for some other reason, right? But she's deliberately shooting herself in the foot by doing something as strange as not selling attack magic scrolls, isn't that right?"

"Yes."

Charlotte listened quietly, showing me her willingness to listen to what I had to say.

"There's no reason for her to act like that, so couldn't that mean that this person is just so kind bordering on stupidity? I wouldn't know for what other purpose she'd do something like that."

She had this strange principle of not selling attack magic scrolls because she was afraid that they'd be used to commit crimes. There was nothing else to it, but her being simply that kind. Hearing that Charlotte nodded subtly, although she didn't seem conceived yet.

"I guess so. But what does that have to do with us having to stop here?"

“The boy you’re looking for must have entered that store, just as you guessed. That’s certain.”

I was trying to stop Charlotte from thinking any deeper into this by telling her the truth backed by plausible reasoning.

“And that kid obviously realized that there was something wrong with the demonic scrolls he was trying to sell. He’d try to sell the fireball scroll in the next store, right? That’s only logical.”

“It must have been like that.”

“What would you have thought seeing a kid carry around something as dangerous as that if you were someone like that shopkeeper?”

What would the shop owner, who is so wary of crimes to the point of not selling attack magic scrolls, do, faced with a kid running around with a fireball scroll?

“I would have taken it…… Something like that, right?”

“You wouldn’t have let the kid carry around that thing with him no matter the price, right?”

In fact, Eleris was trying to buy that fireball scroll off of me without even knowing who I was. It was also true that she became angry with me for carrying something so dangerous with me.

“Additionally, she must have seen the scroll book he was wearing when he sold the fireball scroll right?”

“That… could be the case.”

Eleris thought I was someone who stole and sold scroll books. So she almost took away my scroll book as well, saying that I probably had more dangerous scrolls in there, too.

Then she found the demonic scrolls.

It seemed like Charlotte wasn’t able to understand what I was trying to express with this lengthy explanation.

“What I’m going to say now is pure speculation.”

I wasn’t actually guessing, these were hard facts, but I had no choice but to sell it to Charlotte like that.

“That person probably checked the contents of the scroll book, so I’m guessing she was able to recognize them as demon scrolls. Going by that, we could assume that she probably is a wizard.”

Although she was actually a vampire who happened to be a wizard, I only told her the second half of that truth. If she asked me how I could know that, I would have nothing to say to her.

“Assuming she recognized that they were demon scrolls. She must have questioned him about where he got them, right?”

“I guess so. What are you trying to say?”

Charlotte asked me, as if she still didn’t get what I was talking about. Charlotte always lost her composure when it involved Valier.

Of course, now was the right time to hit her with a sudden revelation.

“I think she’s somehow trying to protect that child in some way.”

Before landing in a much more dangerous situation, I opted to tell Charlotte some half-truths.

“If it’s true that this person is a wizard, is able to recognize a demonic scroll, and is indeed a good person, she must have tried to help him once she found out that he was in danger.”

Hiding him or sending him far away. I didn’t tell her the specific method of how she was protecting him, but she seemed to think of various possibilities already.

“If we’re so sure we can find him through her, we should dig even deeper. And how do you even know that this person is actually protecting him? Your conclusions are only based on guesswork. Yes, your guesses could be true. Then why do we have to stop here? According to what you said, there are no other clues than what that person knows.”

“It might be more dangerous for him if we found out his whereabouts.”

“!”

Charlotte opened her eyes wide at my words.

“If we find out, so could Bertus.”

Charlotte thought it would be good if she were able to find the boy, but she didn’t think that far ahead apparently.

“We’ve already caused quite the commotion on this street. I don’t know how far this news will spread. But if we were to actually find a meaningful clue, Bertus would be able to find out. If you start moving people to dig further into the shopkeeper, of course Bertus would know.”

Charlotte might be able to find out his whereabouts that way, but there was a chance that this information could reach Bertus’ ears. Then he’d also move to find the boy, throwing him into a very dangerous situation.

“I confirmed that the boy is safe with my supernatural ability. I don’t exactly know how he’s doing, but if we were to forcibly find out the information that person is hiding, things would become even more dangerous for him.”

“……”

I didn’t have enough evidence to prove my speculations.

The assumptions that Eleris was a wizard, she recognized the demon scroll and was a very kind person that would do everything to protect a single child should all be true.

However, I told her just now that we shouldn’t touch Eleris, especially because she might hold important clues.

If she knew nothing, then it wouldn’t be right to dig deeper, and even if she did know something, we shouldn’t touch her further.

That’s what I told her basically.

“We can’t be sure of that. Of course…… It’s not like I doubt your ability, but we can’t know if that person is really protecting him or not… We just can’t be sure.”

In the end, it was all just speculation, right? It was true that Eleris might hold a clue, but she might have nothing to do with this as well. The boy might have disappeared somewhere else, but she seemed unsatisfied to stop like that.

“Fine. Then let’s go back."

"Again?"

“Yeah, if we give her the impression that we aren’t going to step down so easily, she might tell us the truth even if it’s just a bit, right?”

Of course, this was all bullshit.

All I had to do is give Eleris a sign that it was okay to talk a bit about this.

* * *

We returned to Eleris’ shop. We had no problem seeing into the store as the door was open. Eleris was sitting idle in a place we could clearly see, and when we returned, she jumped up from her seat.

“Y, you returned… Your Highness.”

Some time had now passed, and the number of people passing by was getting smaller and smaller. People directed their gaze towards the shop while passing by but none seemed to have any intention of eavesdropping.

Charlotte regarded the open door and pointed towards the stairs.

“How about we go upstairs?"

“Yes, Your Highness."

Eleris hesitated slightly then led us upstairs again. She wore a very nervous expression.

“I won’t take much of your time.”

"……Okay."

Charlotte wasn't here to interrogate her.

"I think you have a clear connection to the disappearance of this boy."

When she voiced her convictions, Eleris clearly revealed a look of perplexity.

"But I also know that he is in a lot of danger. So I have this hypothesis, that you are hiding or protecting him, because you think he might get harmed, and that it would be just as dangerous to leak information about his whereabouts to me, so you lied…"

Charlotte thought this was too much of an exaggeration. Even I wouldn't agree to something like that.

Charlotte was only presenting this reasoning because of my conjecture, thinking that she should do everything she could.

"I will investigate you in any way I can, whether you tell me something or not. If there's anything you are hiding from me, you should tell me now. If it is true that the boy will be in more danger if the truth is revealed, I was thinking of stopping here for now."

After taking a few deep breaths, Charlotte was looking at Eleris.

"Elena, do you think it would be dangerous for him if I were to find out where he is? Is that why you are hiding information from me?"

I looked at Eleris from behind Charlotte. I gave her a sign by slightly nodding my head.

And, Eleris clearly understood what I meant.

"Yes, Your Highness."

"!"

Charlotte was so surprised she froze up and just blankly stared ahead.

* * *

On the way back to Temple.

“……”

Charlotte was walking as if her soul had been drained out of her body.

“Look where you walk. You might fall down."

“Huh, ah. Yes…”

Eventually, Charlotte collapsed onto a nearby bench after we left the shopping district, saying that she felt too exhausted to walk any further.

“……”

Charlotte sobbed quietly, covering her face with her hands. People would do these things, no matter if they were happy or sad.

Charlotte was crying out of happiness.

‘Yes, I’m protecting the boy.’

‘I already know from what the kid told me that Your Highness does not intend to harm him.'

‘But there are just too many people after him.’

‘That’s why I couldn’t tell you the truth. Please forgive me for this.’

‘I’m telling you this because Your Highness said that you’d use all powers available to you to find out everything no matter what.'

‘He is doing well. I think it would be better for Your Highness to not know where he is located or what he is doing at the moment.'

‘I’m a wizard. Although I’m not the strongest, I’m good enough to protect him. It may be difficult for you to believe in me, but I hope you’ll find it in your heart to place some of your trust in me.’

In the end, Charlotte saw my conjecture become true right in front of her eyes.

After being frozen for some time, Charlotte's knees buckled and she sat down where she was, seeming like she was about to collapse. Then she cried until she was out of breath. In order to protect Eleris, I had her expose this much.

Charlotte was protecting me for being her only connection to Valier.

Therefore, she would also protect Eleris, who was protecting Valier.

"He's okay… He's safe so everything is okay… He's fine…"

Although she wasn't able to see him directly, she did find someone who said she was taking care and protecting Valier. Charlotte was so moved by her findings.

'It seems that it's possible to exchange information through a more inconspicuous method. Through letters, for example.'

'However, meeting in person is too dangerous for me and the boy. So, I think it would be better if you send someone else to send and receive information.'

Eleris was going far beyond what I signed her to do.

'For example, this boy who came with you today…"

Eleris even created an excuse for me to visit her store as Reinhardt.

We didn't know what this revelation of some of the truth would lead to in the future, but if we had stayed still, the fact that Eleris was a vampire would have come to light.

It might not be ideal, but that was the best I could think of at that moment.

Still, Charlotte learned that the boy was safe, and although she wasn't able to meet him, she was able to send him letters as well as receive some from him.

After regaining her composure, Charlotte looked at me and took a deep breath.

"This must never reach Bertus' ears."

"I know."

What she meant to tell me was that I had to watch my mouth, as well as that this

couldn’t reach Bertus any other way either.

My absurd speculation was nothing more than just that. The reason Eleris suddenly decided to open her mouth was because I ordered her to. Charlotte might find it strange that Eleris’ revelation came so suddenly even though she was so adamant before.

However, she wasn’t able to deny that she was able to find the boy because of me, so after some time Charlotte turned to me.

“Thanks. Reinhardt."

Charlotte carefully grabbed my hand as she thanked me.

“You’re welcome.”

I couldn’t bear to meet Charlotte’s gaze. She was smiling. Her smile even reached her eyes. Her hands were a bit cold though.

“Let’s get going. It’s cold.”

“Okay.”

Of course, this wasn’t the end.

Charlotte would now do everything to protect Eleris.

CHAPTER 87

We were inside the mana train to go back to Temple. Since it was night already, there weren't many people on the train.

Charlotte seemed to calmly organize her thoughts, trying to calm her beating heart.

"Anyway, what is that store's true purpose?"

She was so surprised that Eleris knew the boy's whereabouts that she forgot that line of thought. It looked like she successfully managed to organize her thoughts.

"Well… I don't know much about this topic, but don't wizards usually have a lot of secrets?"

"Hmmm… It's hard to accept though. Wizards usually are pretty much weirdos, but…"

Among wizards, being weird was rather common. Even if harmless, there are a lot of people with strange personalities among them.

So, even if one didn't really understand why they did certain things, since there were a lot of weirdos among the wizards, there might not even be a reason for them to do something as nonsensical as that.

"I should think more about this after I fully confirm that she is indeed protecting him."

It was still just an oral testimony. No matter if she could send letters or not, as long as she was sure that Eleris was protecting the boy Charlotte would do her best to protect her.

In Charlotte's current state, as long as Valier's safety was confirmed, she would be able to let this matter go, even if she found out that Eleris was a vampire.

"I hope she isn't some member of a magic association…"

“Magic association?”

Charlotte let out a mournful voice and tilted her head.

“Sigh… There are organizations that focus on magic research. They often try to evade the public’s eye.”

Of course, I knew these things. secret magic associations. It sounded pretty chuuni and I took a liking to it so I just shoved it into the novel.

Underground magic organizations focusing on magic research and experimentation, or simply advocating the freedom of advancing in the field of magic. There weren’t just one or two of these associations, and their tendencies were widely different. Some were conducting experiments going against any moral code in existence, while others were moving to prevent threats caused by magic from the shadows.

As for Charlotte, she still seemed to have some doubts about Eleris, wondering if she was actually part of one of these organizations.

It was a lot tamer than wondering whether she was a demon spy or not.

“But looking at how she’s running the store… I don’t think she’d be part of something like the Black order…”

Curiosity is like a disease.

That would probably fit Charlotte to a T at this moment.

* * *

It had been a long day.

Running around different places and leaving Temple even though it was prohibited. Charlotte found Eleris through simple interrogation. It was truly thrilling to see how she reached the truth by taking such simple actions.

Just randomly asking the shop owners about a boy that was trying to sell scrolls led to the creation of a clear movement pattern, and finally setting her sights on Eleris shop simply because it was slightly suspicious.

After walking a few more laps outside we decided to return to Temple. I didn't actually do any evening training after all.

It didn't seem like Bertus had tracked Charlotte and me, so he shouldn't know where we went.

To be honest, Bertus probably didn't have any time to care about me and Charlotte. It turned out that his people were behind the black market, so he probably had to focus on solving this incident amicably. His head was probably about to explode.

Anyway, Sarkegaar's trail shouldn't get exposed.

As soon as I returned to the Royal Class dormitory after exercising, there was a single person waiting for me.

"……Where have you been all day?"

"I've been training."

Harriet de Saint-Owan.

She looked a bit annoyed for having to wait quite a long time for me.

I hadn't really thought about that "preventing Harriet's leave of absence" matter, because I was following around Charlotte all day.

"How did it go?"

Well, if the matter got resolved, she probably wouldn't want to meet me. Why was she waiting for me like this?

There was also Betus who objected to her leave of absence, so it should have been resolved well. Harriet was just… crossing her arms and not saying anything.

"What? Are you actually going to take the semester off?"

"…No, that's not it. They told me I don't have to take a leave of absence. They can't help it if it's something Bertus requested after all."

"…Then, isn't everything well?"

That was what she wanted, so she could have just told me directly. Why did she seem so restless?

“What? Is there any problem? If there is, out with it already. I’m losing it here.”

When I put my hand next to my ear, Harriet’s expression changed subtly.

I felt something very ominous about the way she acted.

“It’s… It’s… My father wants to meet you.”

“……What?”

What kind of nonsense was that?

Harriet was just a kid, but Grand Duke Saint-Owan wasn’t someone I could handle at my current level, you know?

“No, why is your high and mighty father looking for me?”

Harriet’s eyebrows twitched a little at my remark, but it seemed like she gave up getting angry over every little thing I did.

Rather, Harriet fidgeted around with her fingers. It was incredibly cute how she looked at me with upturned eyes.

But why was she looking at me like that?

“I, it’s just… He didn’t believe his daughter would come up with something like this. So… After I told him what you told me to say, that I can’t take a leave of absence because of this and that… He asked me… Who came up with this… so…”

“……Ah.”

No matter how talented and smart she might be, Harriet was still just the cute little daughter of the Grand Duke of Saint-Owan.

She probably only said cute things like “I love you forever, dad! Dad is the best! I wooove you!” to him. Well, she was set up as a character that grew up being loved by her entire family.

So she probably was the world's nicest, cutest, and most adorable daughter to him. She probably was the kind of girl that would only say things like “I hate you” as a form of rebellion.

Something like “Buy me that! No, I hate that!”

Then his little girl suddenly started saying things like: ‘Father, I believe that it would seriously offend Prince Bertus if I were to take a leave of absence. The Prince even talked to me directly about this matter, requesting me not to take the semester off. If I were to be forced to go against his wishes I fear for my family’s safety… ’.

From Grand Duke Saint-Owan’s point of view, this had to be quite the bizarre situation.

So naturally, he must have thought that she was saying something, someone told her to say or made her read from a script, because Harriet was doing something she had never done before. Actually, Harriet did say that she might forget what she had to say, so we did prepare something close to a script.

“…Anyway, I told him it was me who wrote the script."

“…Oh god. He didn’t believe you, now did he? You aren’t someone that could talk like that.”

Even if she had a good head on her shoulders, she was still too young, so no one would believe bullshit like that.

The child who wasn’t able to even put her opinions into logical sentences suddenly matured, so he thought that there was some force (?) pulling the strings from behind, and that was the correct answer.

So, for some reason, the Grand Duke now wished to see me. Harriet eventually couldn’t resist her dad’s coercion, so she mentioned me to him. That’s why she seemed so apologetic.

You little brat, that was why you’ve been waiting for me until this late at night, looking all fidgety?

“It’s fine, what happened, happened. So how did you introduce me?”

“That’s… That’s…”

Harriet looked into my eyes again, unable to properly open her mouth.

“Surely, you didn’t say something like I’m a beggar with a very dirty personality that beats up people left and right, right?”

“!”

Harriet’s complexion grew paler. It seemed like that was the correct answer.

“Come here, you little punk. Seems like you really want to get beat up.”

“I, I’m sooorry!”

As I slowly approached, Harriet wept bitterly while retreating. So the day came when this brat actually let the words ‘I’m’ and ‘sorry’ leave her mouth , huh?

“I'm really surprised that you actually apologized, but you threw me into some deep shit right now, so I’m going to hit you even more now, you know?”

“I couldn’t help it!”

Even if she was acting cute, it won’t help that punk in the least right now.

“Come here, let me give you a finger flick.”

-Tack!

“Ouch! Y, you… really hit me! You actually hit me!”

“Did you think I’d fake it?”

“I, I can’t believe it… How preposterous… You really hit me…”

Harriet looked at me with a bewildered expression plastered on her face, rubbing her forehead. It seemed like her last doubts about my willingness to hit her had finally crumbled.

‘H, how dare you? You didn’t just say you’d flick my forehead? You actually did it!’

That was what kind of expression she was showing me.

Also, she really was the cutest.

“Welp. I’ll keep it at that for now.”

Her face reddened again at my words.

"What’s with that look? You hit me! You bad guy! You bastard!”

Harriet eventually ran back to her room, huffing angrily.

* * *

Wednesday, the next day.

I had magic sensitivity training and supernatural power classes on that day. The magic sensitivity training was filled with only the first-years of the Royal Class.

Students majoring in divine powers and supernatural powers didn’t usually have to take these classes.

Of course, I majored in supernatural powers, but I was still taking this class. I planned on sitting through it later.

As magic had its own uses different from supernatural powers.

-Uaaaaaah… Feeeeeel iiiiiiiiit…

This class had a teacher that was more like a yoga instructor who made all the students lay down and mumbled some suggestions to them. When I listened to him, I felt somewhat strange and fell asleep. Weren’t we actually getting hypnotized by this yoga master?

Of course, I never mentioned anything about falling asleep, but every time I woke up I felt really refreshed, so I actually liked that class. Actually, the only thing I had to do in that class was standing up on time after being idle all throughout it.

-Feeeel the universe… Receeeeive… its streeeeength…

Woah.

It was coming.

The god of sleep…

When I woke up from my slumber, everyone had serene expressions on their faces. It felt weird. If I had to describe it, it felt like waking up after being dead for a bit.

By the way, was that Yoga Master dude actually a wizard? He looked more like a swordsman than a wizard at first glance though.

“There will be a mid-term evaluation next week."

At those words, all the kids were rather dumbfounded. I was also confused.

Of course, the exam period which would be corresponding to the midterm exams would start next week according to the schedule.

“……I don’t think we’ve learned anything though, so how will we get evaluated?”

Cayer Vioden from Class A posed the question that everyone seemed to have.

How could one evaluate a class in which one only slept? What did he even teach us?

“This course won’t have any exams. We are just checking your performance up to this point.”

“Performance?”

Everyone was almost shouting these words. I could understand that we weren’t taking any exams in this class, but what the hell did performance mean? We were never taught anything, but we somehow were supposed to achieve something? That was what everyone seemed to want to say.

“I will check if your magic power has increased. You will be given points the more it has increased, understood?”

Magic power increases. That was the measure of our evaluation.

“As you all should know, during this class, you have been continuously trained to increase your magic power as well as your sensitivity to it. Of course, we should use your magic power increase as the evaluation criterion.”

We weren’t just sleeping.

We were somehow still training while sleeping.

Actually, I didn’t really know why, but the amount of my mana had continuously increased regardless of what I trained in. I started with 9.9, but now it has risen to 11.

It didn’t just randomly rise, the class was helping us increase our magic power.

“Now then, I hope you’ll have a magical time until next week.”

Everyone was just staring blankly at him, as if they just realized how great this yoga master in front of them was.

* * *

I could now properly participate in the supernatural power control training as well. The power of my supernatural power was more on the lower side, but the speed at which I could activate my supernatural power could not be replicated by almost anyone in the class.

Of course, there was just one other person who had an even faster activation speed than me. I still needed time to convince myself after all. However, that person could use their power as soon as they thought about it.

That was Kono Lint’s teleportation. Of course, it was still rather useless, because he’d be naked the moment he used it. He really was a poor guy in that regard.

Anyway, next in line would be Liana de Grantz.

As the King of the winning mentality, that was just too much.

"It’s all good, but it’s just very subtle, to the point where one can’t tell if you became stronger because you are using your supernatural ability or because you've been training hard. I heard you’ve been working yourself quite hard.”

During my training, my teacher didn't seem to be able to tell if I was properly using my supernatural power or not.

Of course, that didn't really matter much to me, because I could clearly figure out whether my power was activated or not.

I could even feel that the power was developing to some extent.

But in the end, it was still that kind of supernatural power…

This type of ability was like a chuuni's dream. An ability that developed when one was under extreme psychological pressure. Actually, I already knew that it would be like that.

The power's development wasn't that apparent. Then in a crisis it would suddenly evolve and destroy everything around me… Something like that…

Anyway, it seemed pretty cool and convenient, so that was why I put in that setting. However, I was now feeling the pain, because I was now in a position where I had to practice such a ridiculous power.

In the end, it was more efficient to just get pushed into an extremely dangerous situation to quickly raise it instead of doing this.

That said, I didn't really want to do something as stupid as actively seeking out dangerous situations either…

-Prrrzt! Brzzzzzt!

"Oh, Grantz. Your control has definitely improved. Your output has also gotten stronger."

"Thank you."

Liana de Grantz. She was a perfect example for a genius supernatural power user.

It sure would have been nice if I was someone like that as well whose ability grows quickly even if I just stand still. Of course, it wasn't like it's growth rate was especially slow I'd say.

In the end, it was my fault for setting up the condition of having to be in a crisis to level it up after all.

* * *

There was someone among the supernatural ability class students whose expression grew worse and worse every time he saw me showing off the use of my supernatural power.

A-6 Heinrich von Schwarz.

I gave him some true education after he questioned my presence in this class when I didn't even have a supernatural power. Now I could see the guy who wanted me to get a talent the least freak out over me actually awakening a supernatural power.

Of course, after he found out that I was quite similar to a mad dog, he didn't openly argue with me again.

"Tch."

However, every time he saw me, he would turn away his head in disgust.

Harriet was cute, but that guy wasn't cute at all. I didn't really intend to play around with him, so I just let him be.

On my way back from class, my eyes met with Charlotte's, who came out of her private room.

She and I shared a lot of secrets with each other, so it was dangerous if we acted like we knew each other in the open.

I didn't really greet her, but Charlotte looked at me and slightly smiled instead.

Unlike before, Charlotte seemed to be in a good mood. It looked like she was finally relieved of a heavy burden that weighed her down.

The other guys thought Charlotte was smiling at me, so they seemed a little dumbfounded.

Hmm.

Come to think of it, I had to go to Eleris' store to pick up some letters.

Of course, I'd only pretend that I went there to pick them up. I'd actually had to write them myself.

* * *

I decided that I'd go pick up the letters after the ban on leaving the campus of Temple had been lifted. It was impossible for me to leave without Charlotte, and it would be highly suspicious for us to go out together again.

So, I was back training my swordsmanship with Ellen. Ellen didn't really seem to care whether I came by or not. When I was around, she'd look after my sword training, and when I wasn't there, she'd do her own thing.

"Don't you need to study for the midterm exams?"

"No."

Next week, we'd have to take the integrated midterm exams and do our given midterm assignments for each lecture. I didn't pay that much attention to it, but everyone was studying on their own during the midterm exam period.

It was more than obvious that Bertus and Charlotte were still studying even while they were busy with many other things.

Ellen, on the other hand, was still acting the same as before.

"……Aren't you lucky that you actually still get to be the top student of the whole school while acting like that?"

"?"

I'm 100 % sure that I set her up as a character like that. If it was just brains, then B-2 Louis Ankton would be more superior. However, since that guy was a weakass, he wasn't able to get any good grades in sports related subjects. So, Louis Ankton would only rank first for the integrated subjects, that is, written exams, while Ellen would always rank first going by total score, including the grades given by the subjects of individual professors.

Even though I had no intentions on studying a single bit, I still felt weird talking so casually to the person who would snatch the school's number 1 rank like nothing.

Didn't I have to study?

Why?

No, I think it would feel a bit degrading to realize how much worse my brain would be compared to these kids.

Ellen looked at me standing still and shook her head slightly.

"Aren't you studying?"

Of course, she was simply asking.

But what I heard was: "You're not as smart as me, so don't you have to study really hard?"

That was what that sounded like.

That made me angry for some reason.

"Since you don't need to study, I don't either!"

"How does that correlate?"

"I don't know! Anyway, I won't do it!"

I went into crazy mode.

Grades?

Let us happily throw them out the window.

The moment the Gates open, Temple grades and such would become completely useless after all.

I just had to study hard in my own way!

-Clack

Then the gym door opened suddenly and someone came in.

“Number 11, you have a visitation request."

“……Ah.”

It was Mr. Epinhauser.

CHAPTER 88

I already knew who came to see me.

Harriet's father, Grand Duke Saint-Owan.

Was that gentleman so impatient as to come to Temple immediately the next day?

Mr. Epinhauser said that I could decide whether I agreed to meet that person or not, as they weren't my parents, but I wasn't someone brave enough to actually refuse to meet someone like the Grand Duke.

I'm weak against the strong after all.

I went to the main lobby of Temple's Royal Class' dormitory. Mr. Epinhauser took me to a visitation room and disappeared. He said that this was a visitation room but it was completely unlike what I knew from my time in the army. It was just a colorful reception room.

"Are you Reinhardt?"

"Ye, yes."

He was a middle-aged gentleman wearing a black suit, a black fedora, a gray cane, and a stylish beard. Rather than a wizard, he just looked like an ordinary, neat aristocrat.

"It is an honor to meet you, Grand Duke."

I didn't know the proper etiquette used for greeting nobles, so I just went with that.

"Sit down."

"Yes."

I sat across from the Grand Duke. He didn't even have to make a single gesture for a tea cup to float towards me and it was slowly filling up with black tea as well.

No matter how I looked at it, magic sure was convenient.

He didn't say anything else to me, so I was just sitting there while he stared at me. Was he thinking that he was gracious enough to even let me sit across from him like that?

"I heard it was you who instructed Harriet. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

He was blunt and came right to the point. It was rather rude, but it was a good thing for me.

Because he was such a powerful person I didn't want to deal with him for an extended amount of time. He was rather dry but not overly aggressive.

I thought he'd absolutely hate me, but he didn't show any signs of that. Till now that is.

"Why did you do that?"

"She said that she didn't want to take a leave of absence so I just gave her my opinion on what would be the best course of action to take to achieve just that."

"Harriet asked you to help her herself?"

"Yes."

Of course, I did tell Harriet that I didn't want her to take a leave of absence either, but in the end, it was her who asked me how she would be able to avoid taking one, so I didn't lie.

"Hmm… I see. This case has been concluded without any further damage as well, so it wouldn't be harmful to keep Harriet in Temple, is what I'm thinking."

There was Bertus' request as well, so this couldn't be easily ignored. Grand Duke Saint-Owan seemed to have given up on forcing Harriet to take a leave of absence.

But why did he want to see me? Was he just curious about the person's identity who dared to manipulate his daughter?

“But Harriet wouldn’t do something like that.”

“……Pardon?”

At my question, the Grand Duke just looked at me.

“Harriet would never ask a child of such a lowly background like you for their opinion.”

Grand Duke Saint-Owan stared at me after he finished what he wanted to say.

Why was he acting up all of a sudden?

"That might be true, but she did ask me."

“Hmm… Reinhardt, I’m not trying to insult you for your humble origins.”

Grand Duke Saint-Owan placed his cane on his thighs and clasped both of his hands.

"Harriet wouldn’t want to talk to someone of a humble background. So, of course, Harriet wouldn’t have wanted to speak to you, based on your origins… Alas… She actually asked for your advice, and even accepted it.”

Harriet was someone that didn’t want to mingle with commoners, because she thought they were dirty. She came to have such an opinion because she lived intoxicated by some sense of superiority she felt. So she tended to despise anyone that she didn’t seem fit to be around her.

“So, does Harriet like you or something? Or do you like her?”

“I, I don’t know about her, but that wouldn’t be the case for me!”

What was he doing now?!

“You don’t like her? How does that make sense? Do you perhaps have some problems with your eyesight…?”

‘How could you not take a liking to my daughter!’, that was how the Grand Duk was looking at me. He sure was startled.

What was with that guy's sudden change?

He was just someone completely crazy for his daughter after all!.

And then

-Bang!

“D, dad! Wh, what are you talking abooooout!”

Harriet, whose face was tomato red, barged into the reception room.

Having obviously eavesdropped from outside, her face was completely shriveled up. She then pointed towards the door.

“Ge, get out! You, get out! Wait there!”

“Wait! Wait just a moment! Please wait, Reinhardt! Let’s talk more!”

"Y, you’re loud! Dad, please be quiet!”

I left the reception room, leaving behind the Grand Duke, the continent’s strongest wizard, and his daughter.

-I’m so embarrassed! Why did you have to come here?! Why did you ask him that?!

-N, no… Sweetie. What I meant was…

-I don’t care! Get out! Don’t stay here any longer! I told you not to come!

-I just wanted to know who you like as your father…!

-Aaaaaaaah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Don’t say anything anymore! Just don’t! Ah! Ah!

I could hear Harriet’s screaming from inside the room and Grand Duke Saint-Owan just stuttering, not knowing what to do.

……I was quite the fool worrying about getting harmed, I guess.

She grew up under such a father, so it was no wonder that she turned out the way

she did.

“Sigh…”

-I hate you dad! I absolutely hate you! You’re so annoying!

-N, no! I just did this all for your…!

-I don’t caaaaare!

Like that I also got to know how Harriet was usually talking with her father.

If she was behaving like that, it was quite obvious that she read from a script, huh?

I didn’t want to be involved with either of these two anymore, so I ran away.

Fortunately, the Grand Duke didn’t look for me afterward, thanks to Harriet’s admonishment.

* * *

Of course, I wasn’t actually sure if Harriet kicked out the Grand Duke or not, but after some time, she came knocking on my door, her face completely red.

"I-It wasn’t me! You know, right?”

As soon as she saw me, she shouted that.

“What are you talking about?”

“Dad misunderstood!”

I believed she was talking about the thing her father asked me. Whether I liked her or not. That was why her face was so red and she was all fidgety.

It made me want to tease her even more, you know?

“Huh…? You don’t like me?”

“Wha, what?!”

When I threw a fastball, that girl's face went even redder.

"I-I! W-why would I like you…? I don't even like your looks! D-don't talk any nonsense! Why would I like a lowly beggar like you? Don't be ridiculous!"

Harriet was stomping her feet as if she didn't even want to imagine something like that.

"Or not. Why are you getting so angry? You seem like a person that's about to stab someone."

After I said that I closed the door with a smile.

-Hey! Hey! Reinhardt! Open the door!

-Clang, Clang, Clang, Clang!

-I won't stab you! I really won't stab you! Open the door, you jerk!

No way.

I didn't open the door, fearing for my own life.

* * *

After Harriet went away, exhausted from her rampaging, I sat down in front of my desk.

I currently had 6130 achievement points. If I made one more talent bloom I would have 4000 points remaining. If my assumption that the points required to get talents doubled every time I bought one was right, then I had enough to add 2 more talents at the moment.

However, going by my past experiences, it wouldn't be a bad idea to leave some points in case of an emergency. If I used the Revise function in such cases, I might get myself out of a crisis. Spending too much at the moment, seemed to be a bad choice.

After thinking about what kind of talent I should develop next, I narrowed it down.

This decision would also decide my future path.

[Magic Sensitivity – 2000 Points]

[Magic Manipulation – 2000 Points]

These two talents were required to become a master in the field of combat, and were also necessary talents for a wizard.

They were the basis for everything having to do with magic power.

In the wizard's case, they were necessary to evoke magic and move magic power, and in the case of combat masters, they were necessary to strengthen their body using magic power.

Anyway, both were talents with multiple uses, so it would be far better to have them than not. Since I had Ellen training me in swordsmanship, I didn't think it was necessary for me to buy a talent in that area.

Both were necessary talents, but I needed Magic Sensitivity first. It was a type of talent that contributed to the growth of one's magic power, and at my current level, it was more important to increase my magic power pool than being able to manipulate it.

[You have spent 2000 Achievement Points.]

With that, I had two talents.

Self-suggestion and Magic Sensitivity.

My remaining points were 4130. As I expected, it would take me 4000 points to get my third talent.

I refrained from hastily spending my remaining points. In the first place, Magic Manipulation wasn't something that they taught yet, so acquiring it beforehand would be useless.

I decided to postpone the decision whether I should get a third talent or not until after the midterm exams.

Of course, I had no reason at all to do well in the exams.

However, there was no reason for me to get bad results in most classes either.

If I really were to focus on the midterm exams, I'd only do so for achievement points, not to get good grades.

[Reach the top 10 in the midterm exams – 3000 Points]

The challenge related to the midterm exams that I saw when I last checked was still there. This wasn't talking about just within my class, no, it meant that I had to reach the top 10 of the whole first grade of Temple's highschool section, which had about 10.000 students. Even if I was smarter than most of the kids, this was obviously something very difficult to do.

In addition, two more midterm exam related challenges had been added after the challenges were updated.

[Cheat during the midterm exams and get caught – 500 Points]

[Get the lowest rank in the midterm exam – 1000 Points]

"……"

If I were to rank last among 10.000 people, I'd get a thousand points.

I'd automatically get the lowest rank after I got caught cheating, so I'd get 1.500 Points.

Both were very easy to do. If I were to purposely try to get 0 points there was literally nothing that could go wrong. It was overwhelmingly easier than getting into the top 10.

That punk was doing this on purpose, wasn't he?

I'll show you.

I'll get to 10th place.

* * *

That evening. In the dining room.

My evening training had ended, but I was still eating some late-night snacks with Ellen as always.

Today's menu was fried rice.

Ellen made it.

Kids like her were supposed to be good at cooking after all, right? She didn't even need my advice anymore and can pretty much make everything on her own, right?

After some time, my cooking won't even be able to compare to hers anymore, right?

"……You said, you wouldn't study."

"There are some things people just ought to do."

When I told her that I would study until the midterm exams and would take a break from training, Ellen just nodded while shoving some fried rice into her mouth. My goal was to get into the top 10 of the integrated exams. The individual professor's subjects didn't count to that particular ranking.

So, the only things I needed to study were what we learned during the common classes.

"I think you'll do well in your studies."

"……What's with that so suddenly?"

Did she just give me a compliment without a shred of hesitation? That caught me off guard.

Then Ellen told me calmly something pretty surprising.

"Yes, you are smart."

I really didn't know what was going through that girl's head. What was with this? Of course, I might think that way because of the words she was usually using with me.

"Oh… Thank you."

Well, yeah. It did feel pretty good.

I also felt like I already lost after getting happy by being praised by a high schooler for being smart.

Also, she was probably a lot smarter than me as well.

“Hey, would you like studying with me then?”

“No.”

Of course, Ellen would refuse my request of mooching off her intelligence.

Anyway, I had a new short-term goal.

Cramming, that is.

Even if they were just first year high school students, was it even possible for me to beat 10.000 students and make it to the top 10?

I’d see the answer to that question next Monday and Thursday during our common classes. The other professor’s classes would also hold their midterm evaluation next week, but I didn’t pay that much attention to those.

I could study on my own, and was pretty confident that I would reach a high rank. However, I had to get the best results, not just pretty good ones.

How did the midterm exams go in the original again?

It was one of the parts that were supposed to showcase Ludwig’s tremendous improvement.

Wasn’t there that common old-fashioned main character trope? The energetic protagonist with a strong sense of justice, who was pretty much an idiot.

So even though Ludwig studied really hard, he would still end up at the bottom of the rankings. Of course, after he studied together with a certain guy named Louis Ankton of Class B, his grades gradually improved.

As far as brains goes, Louis Ankton was the smartest one of the Royal Class’ first

years.

Of course, that guy was highly selfish on top of being a nerd. He also was someone quick to run away. He wasn't a bad guy, but he was the type of guy I would have loved to give 100 finger flicks to, because he was just so annoying. In fact, it was probably that same Louis Ankton who went to tattle to the teacher about Cayer's and my fight in the changing room on my first day in Temple.

Only after Ludwig helped and took care of that guy would he open his heart to others and help out. It should have been right when they got into 2nd grade.

Ellen had no intention of studying at all, while I was trying my hardest to get myself to rank 10 if possible.

That was the conclusion.

* * *

"Hey."

Thursday evening.

"Huh?… Uhm? Me?"

I called out to Louis Ankton, who was on his way back after the common classes.

"Who else is there other than you, huh?"

I approached Louis, who was shivering out of some form of fear, and placed my arm on his shoulder.

"I have a question for you."

"Erm… Huuh? Wha-what do you want to ask?"

If I were to study with that punk, my chances of getting into the top 10 would be very high. The fact that I, who was pretty much infamous among the first years, spoke to him made Louis' complexion grow very pale.

"Hey, am I hitting you? Why are you acting like that?"

As I laughed loudly, his complexion grew even paler.

The delinquent route was actually surprisingly good.

CHAPTER 89

In the original novel, Louis Ankton openly ignored Ludwig for his stupidity and he looked down on anyone who wasn't smarter than him. Even in Class B, that got along well with each other, he was an outsider. He looked down on everyone in class as lowly humans with no influence, and lived intoxicated in his belief to be intellectually superior.

So, after receiving some true education a few times, he would later turn into someone open-minded who cared for his fellow classmates.

That was Louis Ankton, the annoying guy.

"W, why are you at our dorm…?"

However, notoriety was also a type of fame, right?

Louis knew that I was quite crazy, so he just crawled before me.

I entered Class B's dormitory with Louis Ankton, who just came back from his classes, with my arm forcibly placed around his shoulders.

That was actually my first time entering Class B's dormitory. Of course, there were quite a few instances of me running into students from Class B during classes, but I never held much of a conversation with any of them.

Charlotte, Ludwig and Scarlett.

These were the only people I knew there.

When Reinhardt, the first year's super villain, suddenly appeared here, people felt like they were about to get swept away as soon as they made eye contact with me. I was even dragging around Louis Ankton like a prisoner.

"Oh, Reinhardt? What's the matter?"

Charlotte smiled when I ran into her in the hallway. It seemed like she didn't find it

strange for me to be here.

My heart tightened as she smiled at me. On one hand I felt guilty and on the other I felt quite happy as it seemed that we finally managed to get along. It was complicated.

“Oh, I’m going to study.”

“Aah… With Ankton?"

“Yeah. I heard he’s smart. Right?”

So she thought I came with him. That was why she smiled.

“Yes. That’s right.”

Charlotte nodded her head and moved her gaze to Louis Ankton.

“Would you mind, if I joined you?”

I had to get some good grades in the coming exams, but so did Charlotte. When I said that I was going to study with that guy, she seemed to want to come along.

If this were the original he would have said something rude like “Why should I help you with something like that?” and coolly passed by us.

However, these developments were quite different from the original.

Super Villain Reinhardt and the Princess were standing before Louis Ankton and asking him to study together.

"Huh, No. Not at all!"

I didn’t know what he was thinking on the inside, but that was the answer he gave us.

On top of that, something that I didn’t expect happened.

“Huh? Reinhardt? Why are you in our dorm?"

Ludwig, the empty head, appeared.

“Oh, Ludwig. We are going to study together. How about you come along?”

And then the cute, pretty, lovely and kind Princess’ proposal reached our ears.

“Sure!”

No!

That guy’s a black hole!

* * *

Ludwig was unable to study, that didn’t mean he didn’t though. He studied hard because he was very hardworking person. However, his grades were still disastrous.

My original plan was to get private tutoring from Louis Ankton. However, I was fine with having Charlotte around. She was smart.

“Uhmmm…”

“Urgh…”

“Aah…”

However, all my plans were thwarted by that destructive idiot, Ludwig.

We were now sitting around a table in Class B’s common reading room with textbooks piled up next to us.

“Ah… That. Ludwig.”

“Oh, Charlotte. I’m listening.”

“So. Going by the context, you can see that the speaker is denying his or her own fault, right?”

While solving some literary problems, Ludwig asked if we could explain that part to him, saying that he didn’t understand it.

“That. I don’t know what you mean with denial. They said that they were wrong, right?”

“Right. That’s what they say, but they're trying to change the subject, saying it was actually someone else’s fault, right?”

“Uhmm… Is that so? Even though they said that they were wrong…”

“No, no. So you see…”

That void headed idiot was bad in all subjects, but he was worst in literature. He was unable to read between the lines and could follow context even less. He was a madman who just read a single line and only continued reading after he supposedly solved a problem.

Charlotte was patiently trying to teach Ludwig little by little , while Louis just watched them mouth agape.

How could such an idiot even exist?

That was what his expression seemed to say.

“No, you gorilla. How can you pretend not to know that, huh? What do I even need to explain?! How the hell did you even learn how to write with that shit brain of yours?”

In the end, when I actually said something, Ludwig just shook his head and laughed.

“Sorry, seems like I can’t study that well…”

“Reinhardt! Don’t be too harsh.”

Charlotte looked at me with her brows slightly furrowed, asking me why I was talking so harshly to him. I didn’t want to go against Charlotte, so I tried to calm my anger and just remained quiet.

Wow.

So that was what my main character was like.

This was all my fault, everything.

Anyway, with the appearance of that black hole called Ludwig, we were not just studying, we were working on a miraculous salvation project out of nowhere.

"Now, what is the name of the largest and first vassal state in the southern part of the Empire?"

Ludwig's expression seriously hardened at Charlotte's cheerfully conveyed question.

"Ke… Ke something. Kern? Kernheight?"

"Kernstadt! It's Kernstadt, you idiot! How can you get the same question wrong 10 times in a row?! Huh? Even 10-year-olds know this! It's so easy that it probably won't even appear in a test! You can't even memorize that?!"

It wasn't me this time, but Louis Ankton who jumped up with zeal. Louis, who had begun to go beyond simple astonishment to straight up disgust, jumped up in fury, however when he saw Charlotte and me looking at him he paled and slowly sat back down.

He did mock some kids, but he wasn't someone that was easily angered, however he got so angry at that moment that he completely forgot us two and jumped up.

Charlotte didn't say anything to Louis, seeming to understand what he was feeling at the moment.

However, Charlotte only looked a little sad and carefully placed her hand on Ludwig's shoulder.

"Ludwig… When I was young, I had a very serious head injury. Has anything like that ever happened to you?"

She seemed to think that Ludwig was that way because of some type of injury or disease.

Wow, the nicest person in this room actually said the worst thing.

"Huh? Nothing like that ever happened to me though…?"

"Huh… Huh?"

Nothing like that ever happened to him, so why is he like that?

Charlotte had her mouth slightly open. It seemed like she sincerely wanted to ask that question.

"As I thought, the Empire should really start implementing a public education system…"

Charlotte, who expressed similar sentiments before, seemed to seriously contemplate the implementation of public education while staring blankly.

Tempel wasn't part of a public education system, but an elite system. And Ludwig somehow got into the high school department of Temple the same way I did.

He did say that he never received proper education before.

Neither of us were supposed to have any chance to get an education, and yet there were two dramatically different cases sitting at the same table, Ludwig and Reinhardt.

It was no wonder that I got some strange looks.

Charlotte began to talk to the innocent looking Ludwig with firm eyes.

"Ludwig. It's not your fault. It's the Empire's fault for not providing free basic education to its people. Yeah, you're not the problem."

Charlotte, did she actually hate Ludwig?

Her choice of words was the worst at the moment.

"Re-really? That's a relief then!"

"Yes! In the future, the average intellectual level of the common people must absolutely increase. There should never again be a case as sad as this!"

"Thank you, Charlotte!"

As such chaos unfolded, in which Charlotte was shooting out one venomous remark after the other without actually realizing it, and Ludwig actually thanked her for that.

That moment was enough to showcase Ludwig's level of intelligence.

I shouldn't get distracted by this.

"Hey, what do you think would be good to study for this exam?"

"Huh… Huh?"

"Quickly, tell me."

In that chaos, I somehow had to fulfill my original goal.

* * *

It was impossible to study quietly as I wanted because of that void headed idiot, Ludwig, but I at least succeeded in getting some exam question predictions from Louis Ankton.

Evening.

I casually ate in Class B's dining room.

"Y-you… Aren't you supposed to eat with Class A?"

Louis Ankton asked me, while his eyes were questioning why I would even eat here.

"There isn't any rule stating that though?"

"Oh…"

It wasn't like we weren't allowed to go in and out of each other's dorm, we just didn't. Everyone else was staring at me with strange expressions on their faces as I entered Class B's dining room and casually ate there.

I really wanted to say something like "What do you want?!", but I just decided to eat quietly, because I was afraid that I'd hear something unpleasant from Charlotte.

Charlotte was my suppressor.

"Phew. Thank you, everyone. This made me realize just how bad my brain actually

was.”

Ludwig smiled as he said so, while Louis and Charlotte’s expressions became a sight to behold.

"The fact that you realized how stupid you are is actually quite something already.”

“Really?”

Ludwig only laughed after hearing my words as if I praised him. The guy wouldn’t get angry no matter what one said to him after all. Was it because he was dumb that he didn’t understand when someone was criticising him?

Still, I’m pretty sure he was just a good-natured guy.There was this awkward atmosphere floating in the room because of my presence. As soon as I started to talk casually with Ludwig, everyone started to eat and talk loudly.

Obviously, Class B had a completely different atmosphere than Class A. Everyone seemed to be friendly. Someone even suddenly began to play an instrument.

It seemed to be an instrument similar to an ukulele.

As if it was a common thing, everyone was just listening to the exciting and fast melody getting played while they were eating.

“The performance is good, right?"

Ludwig asked as if asking for my approval.

“Yeah, it’s good.”

Although it made the dormitory suddenly seem like a medieval tavern.

The one playing the ukulele or something similar was B-10 Lanion Sessor.

His talent was music. He along with Delphine Izadra was one of Ludwig’s best friends. The guy was the mood maker of Class B. He was someone who’d play some kind of instrument at any time while he was at the dormitory, and if someone requested a song from him, he’d practice it and tried his best to make his listeners happy.

He seemed oddly useless, but without him, everyone in Class B would quickly get bored. So, that guy held a surprisingly important role.

“How is it?”

Charlotte asked me again.

“It’s good.”

I felt like I should hold a beer in my hand instead of this fork, faced with such an exciting performance.

It was definitely much more exciting than Class A’s dinners, where one could only hear the sounds of cutlery clinking on plates. Charlotte was still smiling at me.

Putting everything aside, Charlotte apparently seemed to like the kids from Class B quite a bit.

I felt like it was pretty good here as well.

While listening to that rhythmical performance going dongdididang dongdududangdang…

I honestly…

Craved for a drink.

Class B was seen as the inferior class, but everyone was having fun in there. It hit very differently seeing that with my own eyes.

It wasn’t like I didn’t like my life in Class A, but everyone was just focusing on improving themselves and training over and over. To be honest, Ellen did nothing but train, ignoring all the fun things this world had to offer.

“One more time!"

Lanion Sessor, drunk on his own performance, shouted for an encore himself.

Watching that scene, I realized that I had long forgotten the concept of enjoying life.

It was a night that made me want to go to sleep with no worries and no thoughts.

* * *

Even after dinner, I continued to study in Class B's reading room. Ludwig excused himself and went off to do strength training. It seemed like he felt really sorry about that. It really wasn't something he had to feel sorry about though. No, really.

There were only three people left in the reading room: Me, Charlotte and Louis.

Louis Ankton checked over the list of expected exam questions, and memorized them. To be honest, I didn't really need any help from these brainy people except for memorization.

"Reinhardt. Just asking, but since when were you the type to care about grades?"

I was kind of caught off guard by Charlotte's question.

"…There's no reason not to, right?"

Of course, I didn't want to care about them, but I had to do this for achievement points. Charlotte seemed to think that it was very unexpected for me to even study for exams.

"Hmm… I thought you'd have more of a "Why should I care?" attitude about it."

Charlotte smiled to herself.

She was correct.

She knew me so well!

Charlotte was smart, and my brain wasn't that bad either, so, unlike when Ludwig was still around, we managed to get a lot of work done. I managed to answer almost all the problems I practiced.

At this level, literature and mathematics weren't that difficult, and as my job required me to memorize a lot of things that that action almost became an occupational disease, I had no problem in that department either.

I couldn't write while checking the story settings every few seconds after all, so I had to memorize huge chunks of the story.

So, memorization was actually my forte.

Louis Ankton was staring at me strangely.

"……What? You got a problem?"

"Huh? Ah. No…"

"What are you so surprised about?"

"No, well… You actually were smart…"

He must have thought that I was an idiot comparable to Ludwig due to my role as a bully, but as he continued to watch me, he seemed to realize that I was able to quickly memorize things and replicate them without hardly making any mistakes. That seemed to surprise him.

"Just what the hell did you think of me before?"

When I asked him that with a dangerous glint in my eyes, he audibly flinched.

"Hah, No! That's not wh-what I meant…"

"I knew you were smart, but I also didn't know that you were good at studying as well."

Charlotte seemed to smile because she didn't expect me to do so well either. Both Ellen and Charlotte seemed to think that I was smart.

Yes, of course, I had to be. That was only natural. If I was dumber than you guys, that would be rather shameful.

However, actually, compared to these four people, Charlotte, Bertus, Louis, and Ellen, I really had a much worse brain.

How shameful…

Ellen in particular. I'd lose against her in both studies and a fight.

I was getting so tremendously overwhelmed in every aspect by a single high schooler.

"Oh well. Let's just quickly move on. The exams are just around the corner."

Let's just study.

Following that, after all our classes were over, I would study with Louis Ankton and Charlotte in the Class B dorms. I was a little worried what Bertus would say if he found out that I was studying in Class B, but I realized that I didn't have to be that careful because of what Charlotte told me before.

By the way, although both of these two were smart, they had different approaches on how to study.

Charlotte usually took notes on the things she had already grasped and memorized them.

Louis Ankton's approach was slightly different.

"This is going to be a problem."

"What?"

"This is the only question I could ask about this."

This guy studied while thinking about how he'd pose the questions if he were to make the exam. Of course, he memorized the whole thing, and studied by checking the parts that were likely to be asked.

He was even preparing for the midterm evaluations of the professor's individual subjects, seeing as he was already quite confident in his preparations for the common classes. He was studying magic formulas. Something I wasn't really familiar with.

Since my goal was to only get high marks in the common subjects, I wasn't really that well prepared for the professor's individual evaluations. Almost all the exams were written, so the only subjects that actually had practical exams were alchemy and

divine studies.

Anyway, Louis Ankton was trying to figure out what problems he might create for this subject, which was the most necessary for him.

“Phew… They should really hurry up and lift that ban on leaving.”

Charlotte muttered in a daze, completely spacing out.

“Yeah.”

I was the only one who knew what she meant by saying that.

Charlotte had to be more careful from now on, so she wouldn’t be able to go directly go to Eleris’ shop.

Only when the ban had been lifted would I be able to go outside and quickly run to Eleris’ store.

That seemed to be the only thing that occupied her mind at the moment.

* * *

All weekend, except for my morning training, I didn’t do any physical work out, and only studied. Even though I was pretty sure I memorized everything, I felt exhausted in a different sense than before because I studied so hard.

So, in the end, I stopped working on the common subjects and studied for the professor’s individual subjects. I felt like I was going to go crazy if I continued to stare at the same thing over and over.

It was pretty much certain that I would do pretty well, but considering the outcome, I thought it would be okay to get a single question wrong. However, If there were more than 100 people who got a perfect score in all the subjects, one might not even reach the top 100 if one got even a single question wrong.

Anyway.

I really got only one question wrong on the midterm exam.

Therefore, my ranking for the integrated midterm exam was 784th place.

I only got a single one wrong, and that was what happened.

Everything went to crap.

However, there was something even more troublesome.

“This is the overall ranking after combining the grades of the professors’ individual midterm evaluations and the integrated exam.”

“……”

Mr. Epinhauser compiled the results of the professors’ midterm evaluation and posted the overall ranking of the Royal Class’ first years.

Everyone was shocked to see the results.

[1st Place – Reinhardt]

[2nd Place – Ellen]

[3rd Place – Bertus de Gardias]

[4th Place – Louis Ankton]

I got 1st place on the wrong ranking.

CHAPTER 90

In the integrated exam I reached rank 784, however my overall score got me to 1st rank among all the first years of Royal Class.

The reason was very simple.

Simply put, I got an A+ in all midterm evaluations of the professor's individual subjects.

Thanks to my training with Ellen, my knowledge about swordsmanship theory as well as my swordsmanship skills improved, so I won against all my opponents in the mid term students' tournament competition until I encountered Ellen.

Did that mean that these guys weren't even as good as my pseudo swordsmanship?

Or perhaps the requirements for turning swordsmanship into a talent were just that strict.

I didn't even have to use my supernatural ability except when I was fighting Ellen. Of course, when I faced her I was beat down in less than 5 seconds as usual.

Anyway, Ellen obviously got an A+ for the swordsmanship classes, and I, who showed tremendous improvements, also got one. The regular class students, with whom I took the classes together with, initially ignored me for being nothing special even though I was also part of the Royal Class. However, that day when they witnessed the tremendous improvement my skills underwent in just a few months, they also seemed to acknowledge me as someone from the Royal Class.

I also wasn't very good at Horseback Riding at first, but I now knew how to ride a horse better than anyone else in that class, so I got an A+.

The evaluation for the Magic sensitivity class was done by checking the total amount my magic power increased, and that yoga master told me that mine had increased abnormally fast. My score was only surpassed by Cayer Vioden, who had a huge magic pool, so I got an A+ there as well.

As for the Supernatural power classes, it was inevitable that I would get the highest score in them, because I had enormous control over my power after all, and it seems like I received the highest score in Meditation because apparently my concentration was just as tremendous as my control. I was just pretty patient though.

And since Divine studies and Alchemy were reliant on memorization, I simply got the highest score by studying normally. As for comprehensive physical education, with the assistance of my supernatural power, I was able to clear all the physical tests, also giving me the highest score.

Ellen and I were the only ones who received the highest score in all the professor's individual subjects.

However, Ellen got 2 questions wrong in the integrated exam.

So I ranked first.

I was only aiming to be among the top 10 of the integrated exam, but I ended up reaching 1st place on the wrong ranking and because of subjects I didn't even properly prepare for.

"……"

All the students except Ellen, even Bertus, were looking at me somewhat strangely.

Just what is that bastard?

Their expressions showed a complex mix of surprise and doubt.

* * *

Apart from me, Bertus also seemed to have been victorious in his competition against Charlotte. Charlotte's total ranking was 6th. She did well on her written exams, but she couldn't get a grade for the physical classes because of her weak constitution, so this result was only natural.

"What the… How are you ranked first? How does that make sense?"

Harriet asked me something like that, ready to fight the results. It seemed like she didn't understand how this could have happened.

“It doesn’t matter whether you think it makes sense or not. It’s reality after all, you know?”

“Lies! I can’t believe it!”

“Sure, by the way, good work reaching 8th place.”

Harriet was placed 8th. At my slight provocation her face turned bright red.

“I-I’m majoring in magic, so my magic subjects are all that matters! I don’t have to do well on something like some lowly integrated exam!”

Of course, Harriet was only interested in magic, so she didn’t even spare a glance on any other subject that didn’t have anything to do with her major.

“I see, so what? You still lost.”

Her face turned even redder when she heard me say that she ‘lost’. All our classmates were watching what was happening here, so I stood up and tapped Harriet on her shoulder.

“Hey, 8th place. Someone ranked 8th should just live like someone ranked 8th. Just stay quiet.”

"Wh-what!"

“What? Are you jealous? That you can only admire the life of someone ranked 1st from afar? Hahahahahahahahaha!”

Now Harriet’s face turned bluish as I showed her a deliberate and malicious smile, teasing her to the limit. Bertus covered his mouth and was quietly chuckling at this rather funny scene, and the others seemed to suffer from cognitive dissonance, because they just witnessed me teasing Harriet so openly.

They knew I was rather blunt with Harriet, but they didn’t know that it was to such an extent.

“Y-you! You! You dirty beggar!”

Harriet calling me a dirty beggar hurt me as much as an ant’s kick.

“And you’re the young lady of a Grand Duchy who lost against a dirty beggar… No! You didn’t even barely lose! You’re 8th place! You lost to me by miles! Hehehehe! Our Grand Princess truly is great and sublime.”

“Aaaaah! You! You! You’re deeeeeead!”

Harriet couldn’t stand my teasing any longer and charged towards me, so I just opened the classroom door and left.

“Heeeeeey! Stop!”

“Just chase me! Try following me at the speed of someone ranked 8th!”

“Aaaaaarg!”

I didn’t mean to place 1st, but now that I did, it kind of felt good.

* * *

At lunch time, Bertus sat down next to me.

"Aren’t you amazing, Reinhardt?”

“To be honest, it just somehow ended up like this.”

Bertus was satisfied as long as he got to win over Charlotte. In fact, Ellen kept on outperforming him in the original novel, but he didn’t really care. Rather, he’d appreciate that person even more as a talent he needed to acquire.

I didn’t really know if I was treating that whole being 1st thing too lightly, but I just didn’t care all that much.

“I knew you were rather hard working, but it’s still surprising.”

Apparently, Bertus decided to rate me even higher. Then he looked towards Ellen, who was sitting across from me.

“I truly thought that it was rather strange for a troublemaker to get Royal Class’ 1st place, over a certain someone, right?”

“Ain’t that a bit harsh?"

“No, it’s the truth though, don’t you agree?”

“Yeah, I can’t deny that.”

It seemed like Bertus thought that Ellen would be the undisputed number 1.

However, I was ranked 1st, not Ellen.

Bertus found that quite amusing. Ellen didn’t respond to his words. She was the type of person that wouldn’t care whether she placed 1st or not.

And then there was Ludwig who stopped as he passed by the table Class A was sitting at.

“Reinhardt! You got to first place, right? Congratulations!”

That guy got an A+ in everything that involved moving his body, but he was just awful in any written exam, so his rank would never change.

“Ah, yes. Thank you.”

It was Ludwig who landed on the last place without a doubt. Charlotte also passed by my table, giving me a slight smile. I knew what it meant without having her to tell me.

Whenever she smiled while looking at me, I thought I might die, not in the literal sense. It was always that complex mix of joy and guilt that bubbled up in me.

She got pushed back by Bertus this time. Did she not care at all about that?

“By the way, Reinhardt, you seem to have become quite close with my sister, right?”

These words send a soul numbing tingle down my spine.

I didn’t know if that was all he knew or if he found out anything more. However, even the other guys in my class knew that Charlotte and I had a pretty good relationship.

“Well… Kind of.”

“It’s fine. No need to be so nervous.”

Bertus told me that he didn’t really care about that, so I didn’t need to worry. If anyone else told me that I wouldn’t have minded, but this was Bertus, so I couldn’t just believe that.

When he told me to not be nervous, I got even more nervous.

“Since the midterm exams have come to a conclusion, the group missions will start soon.”

Hearing Bertus’ words, I now felt that the next event was inching closer.

“Are they going to follow the normal schedule?”

“Since nothing has happened ever since that incident, the ban on going out will be lifted soon, so the schedule won’t be changed.”

Group missions.

They were exams disguised as a trip.

They were fast approaching.

* * *

It was May. The weather was getting warmer during that month.

During the monthly physical scan, it was revealed that I had developed a new talent called Magic Sensitivity, so there was quite the uproar.

A lot of people were skeptical about my infinite aptitudes, so it was quite surprising that I actually awakened two talents already.

It caused such an uproar that I decided to postpone the awakening of my third talent. If talents just popped up one after the other, that would be suspicious in itself.

Also, there was no further reason to ban us from going out.

As Bertus said, after our common classes on Monday, Mr. Epinhauser announced the

start of the group missions.

Even if it was called a mission, it was still ultimately an exam.

“Once per semester we shall conduct group missions starting the first year of Temple’s highschool department.”

“The group missions are a competition between class A and B, but it is also a strict exam that tests your cooperative spirit and your unity as a class. Keep in mind that the more one cooperates with the group and contributes, the more points said individual will receive.”

“The grades given for group missions are reflected in your grades for the whole semester. Of course, the winning class will receive better grades.”

“Group missions can take place inside or outside of Temple.”

“This is the Royal Class, much different from the regular classes. Therefore, the tasks will be more difficult than what is given to the general classes. Be aware that very dangerous situations may arise. In fact, a lot of people might get hurt or incapacitated.”

“Of course, you are allowed to not participate in the group missions on your own judgement. In that case, the group's score will be reduced.”

This was the biggest reason why Bertus needed competent class members and dissuaded the other kids from taking a leave of absence.

Because the group missions held every semester were an important factor when calculating one’s final grades. If even one person was missing, there was a very high possibility that we would be at a disadvantage.

For example, even if Bertus surpassed Charlotte during the mid term exam, if Class B won in the group mission, Bertus might get pushed back by Charlotte in the end.

I also put in that setting to cause some real sparks to fly between Class A and B by introducing something similar to a competition. Anyway, the genre was still slice-of-life, so they mostly just went on a picnic, but things wouldn’t be fun like that, if all they did was go out to play. Without any action there would only be occasional small fights and maybe some battle of nerves, but that was it.

Of course, as with every event I planned out, not all the missions would go as the teachers planned. There would be unexpected accidents, completely bizarre things happening, and sometimes they would even face real threats or emergencies.

Group missions. The best recurring event for convenient plot development.

If one thought a bit more about this, making such precious children do such dangerous things in itself was quite daunting. Who'd even do that?

Well it was me who wrote it, so it would just happen like that.

If I wanted to shout at someone, then that would be me from the past! I really had a lot of questions for past me!

Anyway, this would be the first group mission.

"The theme of this group mission is 'Survival'."

We would go to a deserted island.

There was no real reason why I chose an uninhabited island as the mission's venue.

I was just watching an episode of Law of the Jungle while I wrote that arc.

* * *

The theme of the group mission was survival, but Mr. Epinhauser didn't even tell us that we would be going to a deserted island. That was because they would only tell you the theme of a group mission, but only after arriving at the venue would one realize what it actually meant.

Of course, I knew exactly where we were going. I thought it might get canceled because of the terrorist incident but that didn't seem to be the case.

It was only natural that everyone was somewhat confused by this absurd sounding theme. There was also one piece of good news.

The ban on going out was lifted and the group mission would run for about five days, from next Monday to Friday. The other high schools would also conduct their group missions during that period of time, so all lectures would be stopped around that

time.

"Have you noticed anyone keeping an eye on this place ever since that day?"

“I’ve been more careful since then, so I don’t think so.”

"It seems like Bertus is definitely convinced that I’m absolutely gone… So I guess he didn’t even see the need to look for me any further.”

As the ban had been lifted, I immediately left Temple and headed to Eleris shop. Now I was able to come to this place even while I took the form of Reinhardt, however I didn’t want to take any unnecessary risks, so I took several detours then changed my appearance before I dared to enter the store.

As always, Eleris and I went upstairs to talk.

“Are you really fine with this? No matter how much Charlotte has become our ally in some capacity, this situation would put you in quite a lot of danger. You might get exposed.”

“I thought a lot about it as well, but if there were to be an emergency, I would be able to make myself disappear quite effectively. Sarkegar and Loyar also decided to only watch the situation for now.”

Eleris had already discussed this matter with the other two.

“By the way, weren’t you somewhere else the time we entered the store?”

Eleris had obviously locked the shop door when we arrived here, but when Charlotte came in, she suddenly appeared from upstairs.

“I haven’t cast any protection magic on the door, but I did set up a type of alarm magic on it. I sensed that the door had been destroyed so I came back as fast as I could.”

Until that moment, Eleris had been with Airi on the Edina Islands. However, she sensed her alarm magic installed on her door going off, so she returned using teleport. She was improvising at a tremendous speed.

If she hadn’t returned in time, Charlotte might have been unaware of the truth, but

she might have lost her whole store as a result, because Charlotte might have found something suspicious.

“What about Airi?"

“They are located in Rajak, the main port city of Edina. I’m occasionally checking if things are progressing without any major problems, so you don’t need to worry about them too much.”

Eleris could check on Airi and co any time using her Teleportation spell. So she told me that there was no need to worry and that I could leave everything to her.

For now we had decided to keep maintaining the status quo. If there were any problems on Eleris’ side she’d be able to manage on her own. Until then, maintaining this relationship with Charlotte would be of help to us.

"Anyway.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

I still had a small thing to brag about, albeit a little childish.

“I got ranked 1st."

“……What?”

"I said I got ranked 1st."

If it was Sarkegaar he’d react quite vioilently going “Uwooooooooaaah!”, but Eleris reacted a bit differently.

"That’s incredible, Your Highness."

She just smiled and complimented me, which made me feel quite good.

CHAPTER 91

I left as soon as the ban was lifted to get Eleris' progress report and tell her about my current situation, however there were even more important things I had to take care of.

"……This?"

"I thought you'd be waiting, so I went there right away."

Since I frequented Class B occasionally, the others didn't really care whether I came in or didn't. So, as soon as I returned to Temple, I dropped by Class B's dorm and gave Charlotte a letter when no one was watching.

Knowing what kind of letter this was, Charlotte quickly embraced it.

Charlotte's pupils were shaking violently.

"Thank you, Reinhardt… Thank you."

I knew she was waiting for this letter ever since the ban had been lifted, so she was deeply impressed that I would run out right away to get the letter. She continued to express her gratitude to me. Whenever the words "Thank you" left her mouth, I left like my heart was getting stabbed by needles.

In the end, all of this was just a lie, so I had to keep lying.

The contents of the letter were basically as follows.

I'm sorry for leaving without a word. I'm fine. This person is protecting me well. I hope you are safe.

I only elongated it a bit, but that was all I wrote. I also mentioned some things that only Valier would know, so that Charlotte wouldn't question its authenticity.

"Well, that was all. I'm leaving."

“Ah, yes ”

I couldn’t stand seeing Charlotte’s face while she was in this state any longer, so I just turned around to leave.

“Congratulations on reaching 1st rank. Reinhardt.”

“Huh… Thanks.”

Leaving behind Charlotte, who congratulated me, I exited their dormitory.

It would be best if my lies weren’t exposed.

I was getting more and more scared of how Charlotte would look at me if my lies were to be revealed.

* * *

The midterm exams were over. In the end I wasn’t able to accomplish that challenge. Well, people would just fail sometimes.

However, it sure was funny how I aimed to reach 10th place, but ended up being ranked 1st somewhere else. Although it didn’t really give me any benefits.

Anyway.

Everything went back to normal.

-Kang!

“Sigh, really now.”

I picked up the sword that got hit out of my hand again. Ellen, as always, was just standing there looking at me.

We did this almost every day. She’d always work me to the bone until I started losing grip of my sword like this. Unless she served as a demonstration target, I was never able to land a single attack on her.

“I think I got a bit rusty after taking a break from training.”

It was only about a week, but it seems like I got rusty over that period of time, because I was doing even worse than before I took that break.

“No.”

“……I’m not?”

What did she mean by “No”? I felt like I was more sloppy than before.

“I raised the difficulty a bit.”

“Ah… Really?"

It didn’t get rusty, Ellen, who was only using 1% of her actual skill and power, was just using 1,5% of her strength. That would probably mean that I had become that much stronger.

“I feel a bit happy about that, but I'm a little curious. Just how easy are you going on me?”

Ellen looked a little troubled at first, but then she pointed her training sword towards the ceiling.

“Me.”

Then Ellen looked at the floor.

“You.”

“Are you pointing at the ceiling? You didn’t mean the sky, right?”

I’d even believe it if she meant the difference between us is like heaven and earth, not just the ceiling and the floor. Ellen shook her head, saying that she wasn’t that good.

“If you use your supernatural power, it’s around this much.”

Ellen was now pointing at a place located at approximately the height of her knees. Without using my supernatural powers, the difference between us was as wide as the distance between the floor and the ceiling, so about 5 meters, and when I used

my powers, I would reach the height of her knees.

That was a huge difference. If the gap in skill between me and Ellen had already closed to such an extent, I should have gotten quite a lot stronger.

“You’ve practiced so much with me, to the point that I couldn’t tell how much you improved.”

“……I know that you’re not actually that conceited and that you’re only pretending to be. But don’t you think that’s a bit too much?”

“But it’s true.”

She naturally was just that much stronger than me, so I had nothing left to respond to her. In fact, Ellen was constantly improving, at a much faster rate than me.

Ellen was a wall that I would never be able to overcome.

“Well, I did feel it during the last swordsmanship evaluation.”

I meant the swordsmanship tournament held between students.

“Everyone one else was moving so slow, I could see their every move.”

If I strengthened my body using the swordsmanship focused preset through self-suggestion, I felt like my physical abilities underwent a correction of about 2-3 points.

My current stats were as follows.

[Strength 5.9(D-)]

[Agility 6.5 (D)]

[Dexterity 7.4 (D+)]

[Magic 11.1 (C)]

[Stamina 10 (C)]

If the correction values were applied, the rank of my physical abilities would be slightly different.

Compared to when I first came here, my stats had almost doubled except for my magical power.

Now I would slowly enter a period where my growth would slow down, but anyway, the fruits of my efforts were clearly visible. If the correction offered by my supernatural powers were added to that, I already had quite the considerable level of physical strength surpassing some of my classmates.

Therefore, even though I didn't have the proper swordsmanship talent yet, I was able to defeat all of my classmates majoring in combat using just my reflexes and physical abilities. Even if they weren't actually part of the Royal Class, they were still first year high school students who majored in combat.

As I was only ever training with Ellen, I felt a bit disheartened, but when I tried fighting my other classmates, it just felt too bland.

In fact, I didn't even use my supernatural power until I had to face Ellen. I didn't really try that much. I won nearly every duel anyway.

Did they ever realize that my swordsmanship was only on the level of pseudo swordsmanship? It didn't seem to be the case.

The displayed information wasn't everything after all.

I've faced a certain high-level opponent so many times, that I knew how to deal with those guys who've only learned some swordsmanship. This wasn't even considering my swordsmanship level.

As I continued to train together with this overwhelming training partner of mine, my level increased tremendously without me realizing. This was a value that wouldn't show up on any measurement.

Of course, it seemed like some of the more skillful students actually didn't join the class. So the results might look very different the next time I took another lecture on swordsmanship.

"Come."

“Here I come.”

After I fixed my stance, I stabbed my training sword towards Ellen.

-Kaklang!

Ellen tried to hit her own sword against my sword that was approaching her. She hit it from up top, pressing it down.

As she pushed down my sword, she grabbed me by the collar with her left hand and threw me down, then dug into my solar plexus with her right elbow, making me drop my sword and then with a flowing motion she hit me with the hilt of her sword.

She then placed her sword against my neck.

She had subdued me so overwhelmingly with dozens of derivative movements linked into a single flowing move.

I then copied her moves. I guided Ellen’s sword which stabbed forward with my own, and proceeded to push my elbow into her solar plexus.

I tried to make the methodes she showed me my own bit by bit.

Then, as soon as she caught me trying to hit her solar plexus, she leaned to my left, turned sideways, making me fall forward slightly.

Damn it.

I shifted my center of gravity so far forward that she was able to take my back.

For that brief moment while I wasn’t able to react, Ellen had already pointed her training sword towards the back of my head.

“you’re dead.”

Knowing how to count to one didn’t mean I could count to ten.

This kid who knew how to count to ten, would show my how to count to two when I could barely say one, and when I managed to somehow count to two, she’d demand I count to three. Then, when I could count to 10 one day, she’d probably demand me to

count to 50.

Learning sure… is hard.

* * *

Morning training.

Adriana stared blankly at me, with her mouth slightly open when I told her that I ranked 1st on the first-year midterm evaluation ranking.

“I already know that I don’t have the best image, but ain’t it a bit sad that everyone’s reacting like that?”

When I said that I felt a little sad about this, Adriana’s expression immediately turned into a frown.

“Ah… I-I’m sorry, junior. I knew you were pretty hard working…”

Adriana patted her cheeks a little.

“But you really don’t have a smart image about you, right?”

“……Can’t deny that.”

Smart troublemakers were quite the rare breed. Everyone, no matter where I went, just held that prejudice that I was a bastard.

Well, it’s not really prejudice though.

“The more I get to know you, the more I get surprised by you, junior.”

At first she must have thought of me as nothing but a mad dog who’d openly swear at his senior, so no matter what I did, I’d end up surprising her. On top of that, I even apologized to the 2nd year’s A-1 Redina.

I was now in a good enough shape that I was able to talk with Adriana while we were running. My classmate’s average stamina scores were about 6-7, D rank, however my score was at 10, C rank. It was definitely above average, and it would be even higher if I applied my supernatural power. Of course, I wasn’t talking about the average

score of the guys with combat talents.

I didn't think I could sprint around Temple at full speed like Ludwig. He had a stamina score of 30. That would be A+ rank. In that regard he was an even more monstrous kid than Ellen.

"By the way, your first group mission will start soon, right junior?"

"Yes. "

"The first mission's theme is survival, right?"

"Is the theme supposed fixed?"

"Well… It's usually something like that."

The first group mission usually had something to do with survival. I didn't actually know this.

"What is your theme this year, senior?"

"Scramble."

Scramble.

In some cases, it was a capture-the-flag kind of battle, in other cases, it had to do with a team acquiring a object at a specific location, and who got it first won. Of course, since it was quite a large scale mission, it wasn't only a battle that lasted for a long time, but it was also something close to an actual battle between classes.

We wouldn't be allowed to do something like that right now, because we weren't able to control our powers properly yet.

However, the survival mission also came with many risks.

"If it's survival, I think you'll do well, junior."

"……You think I'll do well because I'm from the streets, don't you?"

"I won't deny that."

"I said I’m from the streets, I didn’t say I grew up in a jungle.”

"Hmm… It’s not really about that though."

Adriana smiled as she ran next to me at a constant tempo.

“The survival mission is the one the kids from noble families give up on the most.”

They suddenly told the precious children of noble families to live in some damp and humid environment filled with bugs.

Of course, there would be a lot of kids who wouldn’t be able to accept that.

* * *

It was May at the moment.

In this world May was a rather pleasant month. Honestly, with weather like that it was best to just leave everything behind and lie down on the grassy river side of the Han-River. There were actually people who did just that.

The festival was cancelled, but people seemed to have returned to their daily routine. The terrorist incident ended up concluding with its perpetrater still at large.

Anxiety about the Demon Realm’s revival still remained, but the people regained their original vitality. The Empire secured a lot of loot from the Demon Realm, and all the nations that participated in the war came to great wealth.

Eventually, the Golden Age would begin with the wealth obtained from the Demon Realm.

May was the beginning of said Golden Age.

The weather was perfect for camping.

“Urg… Why is it so hot?”

“Rather than hot… It feels so sticky."

All the first years of Temple’s Royal Class went through a large gate and were

teleported somewhere by some Temple officials, who seemed to be high-ranking wizards, and that somewhere was an uninhabited tropical island.

[Event Quest – Group Mission]

[Description ： The theme of the group mission is survival. Please survive until the end of the mission.]

[Goal ： Don’t get eliminated before the mission is over]

[Reward: : 1000 Achievement Points]

And, of course, an Event Quest appearead.

CHAPTER 92

22 students, me included, were standing on a white sandy beach from which the clear water of the sea could be seen.

Everyone was instructed to wear comfortable clothes, not the school uniforms. We were also told to wear long sleeved shirts and long pants if possible, so we were all dressed in similar things.

Of course, Class A and B were located far apart from each other.

Mr. Epinhauser stood before Class A.

The students seemed confused by their sudden arrival at a place like this. The only one who wasn't flustered was Ellen, who was ready to do anything no matter what happened. Even Bertus seemed a little puzzled.

Mr. Epinhauser started briefing us.

"We are currently on an uninhabited island located within the Empire's Kamsencha Archipelago. The island is about three times the size of Temple."

Although it was an uninhabited island, it was rather big. The island was covered in a rainforest and the beach was filled with white sand.

"You have to survive on this island for about five days starting today, meaning from Monday to Friday evening. We will provide you a box with supplies. Whether you hunt or gather common supplies found in this place, no matter what, you will have to survive until Friday."

We have to survive here for 5 days. That might seem like a daunting task, but it wasn't impossible.

As they heard these words, everyone just stared blankly with their mouths open. The nobles in particular were astonished as if it didn't make sense to them why they had to survive in such a harsh environment…

“I-isn’t this dangerous? W-we don’t know what might happen… If we get hurt or something, what should we do…?”

“Yes. Isn’t this too irresponsible to just throw us here leaving us to fend for ourselves…?”

As Harriet was mumbling about how unreasonable this situation was, Heinrich von Schwarz started to complain as well.

“It’s not compulsory. If you want to give up, you can at any point. You’d just fail.”

Of course, it was crazy to ask children to just survive on their own on some deserted island for five days, whether they were from noble families or not.

However, the people gathered here were the best talents the Empire had to offer, only in terms of talent though, not in skills. That was why they received special treatment. And those who receive special treatment would also be given special trials.

Going by such logic, they’d give us more difficult tasks like this.

“You will be given a button shaped artifact.”

Mr. Epinhauser pulled out something that looked like a button.

“Use this if an emergency has occured or if you want to give up. After activating it, you will be sent to a safe place immediately. However, keep in mind that if you use it, you’ll be eliminated.”

We could give up whenever we wanted, and in the event of an accident, actions could be taken immediately.

I could already see some people ready to press the button as soon as we were to get them. However, if one were to continue to fail in group mission, there was a possibility that one had to repeat a year if their results were especially bad. Of course, there was no one who had to repeat a year in the original novel. However, the development had changed, so I didn’t know what might happen

Mr. Epinhauser only explained the facts in an indifferent and cool manner, as always.

-Don’t overdo it, guys. Good grades are one thing, but your safety comes first. This place is safer than you guys think, but if you really can’t take it anymore, you have to use this artifact. Understood?

And I could hear Mr. Mustrang, the opposite of Mr. Epinhauser, briefing his class. However, wasn’t it even more unsettling putting it like that?

“Let me know if you have any questions.”

At Mr. Epinhauser’s words, Bertus raised his hand.

“Are there any dangerous monsters on this island?”

Bertus’ question was to see if they sent us here without even checking

that.

“It is one of the rules to not provide you with any information about the island. However, I can tell you one thing.”

Mr. Epinhauser was speaking calmly.

“This mission is designed to test your crisis management skills and how you’d act in real emergencies.”

Nothing could be guaranteed.

They already determined that we had abilities. Now they were trying to see how we would make use of these abilities. Would we act selfish, hateful, cold-hearted, or irrational?

“You guys are part of the Royal Class. Even within Temple, you are a privileged class, so you have to prove that you are better than the general class.”

There are people who possessed great power but flatter and become dispirited faced with hurdles, and then there are those who’d struggle with all their might to overcome all difficulties on their way even though their power wasn’t all that strong.

The group mission was to confirm exactly that.

Being a student of Royal Class brought a lot of privileges with it. Therefore, it was only natural that we had to overcome even harder trials.

The teacher wasn't even allowed to tell us if it was dangerous or not.

"I won't give you a lengthy explanation. If you want to give up press the button. If you don't think that you are able to survive until Friday, giving up in advance is also fine."

However, if we did that, we'd lose.

Everyone could fully guess what Mr. Epinhauser was trying to say.

"And one more thing."

It was now time for Mr. Epinhauser to tell us the most important thing.

"If you're able to meet certain conditions, you might be able to complete the mission sooner than the expected time. Additionally, the class that satisfied said conditions would receive additional points."

Special missions.

If certain conditions were fulfilled, the mission could end earlier, and the class that managed to do that would receive more points.

"Of course, this is only an optional mission. It won't cause any problems if you aren't able to fulfill it. With this, I have conveyed all the information I can give."

Mr. Epinhauser took out one more button-shaped artifact similar to ours from his bosom pocket and disappeared.

He probably was still watching us from somewhere, but he really wasn't anywhere close to us.

"Di, did… he really leave?"

"I can't believe it. How…"

"What should we do?"

The kids were really shocked that their teacher had left.

Actually, strictly speaking, wasn't this abuse?

It was at that moment that I realized what kind of thing I actually made them do by writing up this development.

-Shaaa…

Clear water was constantly crashing against the shore from afar.

We were literally children who had been abandoned by the sea.

* * *

The far off Class B was also soon left behind by Mr. Mustrang.

It seemed like both Class A and B had lost their spirits. Bertus was deep in thoughts with his arms folded. He probably knew beforehand, but only after seeing this with his own eyes, did he realize just how ridiculous this situation was.

It was rather useless counting on those that are currently out of their minds.

Except for me, Ellen, and Bertus, who were seriously thinking about what to do, everyone seemed to be out of their mind or speechless.

"What's with this? Why do we have to do something like this? How would that help us?"

Kono Lint was complaining.

"So…… What now? What do they want us to do after leaving us here so suddenly……"

That was Cayer Vioden speaking.

Just because they were commoners didn't mean that they were happy with this situation. It was humid and hot. No one would be accustomed to something like that.

The guys from noble families already seemed to have their heads filled with thoughts of giving up. They thought this situation was so ridiculous that they couldn't even

put it in words.

Even the commoners couldn’t stand the situation. The only fortunate thing was that the noble kids who only knew how to wear good clothes, eat good food, and sleep in soft beds, didn't start crying.

In the original, Class A, which had a lot of nobles in it, somehow managed to survive the first day, but then most of them gave up voluntarily. Everyone gave up one by one until only Ellen remained.

Class B would be able to complete the mission led by Ludwig’s initiative.

As the development had greatly deviated from the original already, I didn’t know what would happen in Class B’s camp. So, I had no intention of letting the current Class A follow that development either.

First of all, I needed those achievement points, so I had to be patient, furthermore it would be impossible for me to survive alone, so I had to drag these guys along no matter what.

I opened the communal supply box left behind where Mr. Epinhauser stood before.

Everyone stared at me as I moved. In this situation it was more normal to whine and complain. It was more unusual for a 17-year-old to be so calm.

I took out the contents of the box and organized them. Everyone was just staring at me blankly.

two machetes.

Ten arrows and one shortbow.

A bundle of rope.

Three types of pots, one large, one medium, and one small.

Three throwing javelins with barbs.

One ax.

Three small knives.

One firestarter.

Eleven canteens of water.

And eleven button shaped artifacts.

I thought that was a decent amount of supplies. They were just the basics, but they provided enough tools to leave us alone here.

Everyone was just staring at what I was doing. I just ignored the other guys and looked at Ellen.

“Hey, you won’t give up, right?"

“ Yes.”

Ellen nodded.

“Bertus, you’re not going to give up as well, right?”

Bertus nodded when I called out to him, albeit with a somewhat more serious expression. Unlike in the original, Class B had Charlotte in it, so Bertus wouldn’t give up.

There were two more people who wouldn’t give up no matter what aside from me. I grabbed the machete and handed the short bow and arrows to Ellen.

“I’ll go in there. You take care of this side, okay?”

“Ah… You're going? In there?”

“I have to. I need to find something.”

“N-no. Are you going to be okay? We don’t know what’s in there, you know?”

“Will I die?”

When I said that I would go inside the jungle without much hesitation, Bertus looked

really flustered. It would be a hundred times better to leave the overall leadership of the other kids to Bertus. He seemed a bit perplexed at first, but soon found his composure again.

“O-okay, Reinhardt. I’ll take care of this.”

Anyway, this was Bertus we were talking about. He wouldn’t want to do a bad job either. However, what I asked of him was a pretty simple job, which was taking control of the kids and taking up the leader position.

He must have felt some reluctance to this situation as well, as he grew up in an extremely good environment.

"Come with me."

“Yes.”

I took the lead, and Ellen followed me without saying much.

Ellen and I where probably the most abnormal in this situation.

* * *

Ellen was good with bows as well. So, when any beast appeared, I told her to follow it, leaving the hunting to her.

-Chk! Chk!

Ellen and I slowly moved further in while sweeping through thick bushes and lush greenery located in the jungle.

“It’s fricking hot.”

“It is.”

Both me and Ellen were drenched in sweat. Ellen found her long hair rather cumbersome so she tied it up with a string. There were sweat drops all over her face, nape and neck.

Fortunately, there were no mosquitoes, the worst fiends usually found in a jungle.

This was an exam as well as a mission. Even though Epinhauser only gave us next no information about this island, I knew a lot about it.

This island was a controlled environment. Therefore, mosquitoes, which could spread dangerous infectious diseases that could cost our lives, were completely eradicated. Of course, that didn't mean that there weren't any bugs.

There was an obvious possibility that unexpected accidents might occur, but we wouldn't be faced with the uncontrolled dangers an uncontrolled environment would house.

-Flap, flap, flap!

We could birds fly away because of the noise we caused by cutting down the bushes.

"Can you shoot down those flying birds?"

"……I'm not that good."

Ellen was pretty good at archery, but she wasn't a professional. She didn't have such advanced skills yet.

I didn't really intend to go much deeper. I'd soon be able to find what I was looking for.

"There it is."

"What is that?"

I grinned and pointed to some densely packed trees.

"Is this your first time seeing a coconut?"

They were a staple for uninhabited island scenes.

There'd definitely be coconuts.

CHAPTER 93

Survival on a tropical island.

The most important thing to secure first was water; afterwards came food. One could end up in a pretty dangerous situation because of dehydration. So coconuts were the perfect food for survival as they covered both aspects.

I twisted off one coconut after the other. It was my first time ever climbing a tree, but I was able to climb them surprisingly easily because of my increased physical abilities. I felt like I could climb even better than monkeys.

Ellen also climbed up a different tree and easily picked some coconuts. I mean, I also climbed up the trees without any hesitation, but just who is so good at climbing trees?

After picking some coconuts, I climbed back down and landed on the ground. While carrying five coconuts each in our arms, we returned to the beach.

“Wha… What?”

-Clack, clack, clack.

When we put down the coconuts we were carrying, the others were still looking at us in a daze, but they did seem glad to see us. Even Class B further away from us seemed to do something, while our Class A still seemed undecided.

“No… Why did you bring all of this here?”

Bertus looked astonished at my behavior.

“Once we run out of water, we can drink from those.”

There were eleven canisters, but after we ran out of that water, we could drink as much as we wanted from these coconuts. Everyone already held a canteen and an artifact in their hands, making it seem as if the distribution of the supplies had already finished.

Everyone was sitting idly in the shade, seeming like they didn't know what else to do. Even Bertus was like that.

Well, it would be even weirder if this Prince actually managed to set up a camp in this situation.

First, the most urgent matter of securing a source of drinking water could be put off for a bit. And it didn't seem like anyone had given up.

"Reinhardt, let's talk for a second."

"Ah, sure."

Bertus led me to a place slightly farther away from our classmates.

"Have you done something like this before?"

"It's not that I've done something like this before, It's just that I'd rather do something instead of just sitting on my ass. One has to rest to preserve one's stamina, but before that, certain things have to be done."

"Huh…"

It seemed to him like I was familiar or very experienced with situations like this. However, although I had a lot of indirect experience with these things, this was actually the first time I landed in a situation like that myself. I was just like Bertus, who ended up losing his cool in our current situation.

It looked like I had to give him some advice.

"First, we need a place to sleep, no matter how crude it is. A place to avoid the heat of the sun as well as to protect us from rain."

We needed something like a hut, even if it was just something crude. Bertus nodded his head, seeming to have understood what I meant.

"But how do we make something like that in this situation?"

He had to make something he had never made before. There also weren't any famous shows depicting the eternal battle between humans and nature in this world. It was

only natural that Bertus was stumped.

“There are trees, vines, and palm leaves all over the place. I think we’ll be able to make something that would help by roughly intertwining them.”

“Hmm… Can we really make something helpful with only leaves?”

Even before the survival mission started, I was already thinking about what we should do. I kind of knew how to make a hut, but I wasn’t really confident that it would turn out good. I mean, if I had no other choice, I probably would have tried at least.

“Neither you nor I need to think about that too much. There are others much better at these kinds of things.”

However, there was no need for me to actually do it when there was someone much better at these kinds of things than me.

“Number 7 Adelia. If we leave it to her, she’ll be able to do a good job.”

Her ability was magic tool crafting. Of course, I didn’t really know how related the crafting of magic tools and the building of a hut was, but she was very talented at designing and making things compared to a normal person.

If it was her, she’d at least be able to come up with a plausible blueprint. Better than anything I could come up with.

It kind of felt like how the military made students paint fences.

“Hmm… Is that so?”

Bertus didn’t seem to have any clue about all this.

* * *

Bertus returned to the shady area where most of Class A, who were severely mentally exhausted, had gathered, and called Adelia.

Then he said to her that he was of the opinion that we should make a hut, and asked if she had any idea how to go about that.

“That… If you asked me to make something so suddenly… I don’t even have any equipment or tools here…”

She was someone specialized in magic tool crafting and summoning magic. However, if she was asked to suddenly make a hut like this, it seemed that she was evidently flustered.

“The pillars can be made of wood, and the roof could be tiled with something like palm leaves. Do you have any good ideas?”

At Bertus’ words, Adelia, who was quite cowardly, murmured in a timid, crawling voice.

“Ermm… I think, we could structure it like a tripod… Do we really have to sleep here?”

“If you don’t want to give up, we have to, right?”

Bertus was smiling, and there was no one around that would go and say “I really can’t do this.” directly to his face. Of course, after spending a night here, they’d probably want to give up even more than they do now.

Harriet didn’t say a thing, her face buried in her legs.

She might end up crying. I mean, it was a situation that made one cry, after all.

“Hmm… If I were to make this, I’d need… wood and vines. Really big ones. I think we’d need a lot of leaves as well…”

Adelia murmured as if she was already drawing up blueprints in her head.

“Great. Then let’s do it like that.”

Bertus didn’t feel that great about this situation either, but losing to Class B was even worse. So he forced himself to raise the tension.

“Okay! Let’s try doing something, at least. If we really can’t go on, we can always give up, but don’t you think we should try at least? It’s kind of weird just giving up before we even did anything, right?”

Bertus pointed at Cayer, Erich, and Kono Lint, who were silent.

“You three are in charge of getting us vines and leaves from inside the jungle. As many as possible.”

Everyone had their assigned duties. All of them looked a little reluctant, but they didn’t have the guts to refuse Bertus’ instructions. After Bertus decided on actually giving this a try, his thoughts seemed to flow smoothly.

“Saint-Owan. Can you use magic right now?”

At Bertus’ call, Harriet raised her head with her eyes wide open. Her expression showed bewilderment.

“Ah… Huh? Well… I can’t do anything of a high level yet…”

“That’s fine. It just has to be something of a level that can cut some trees about that size. How is it?”

What Bertus pointed to was a regular-sized tree.

“Uhm… I think I can do that…”

Harriet nodded, a little depressed, but it didn’t seem like something she was completely adverse to.

“Great. Cut down as many trees as possible, but it’s pretty dangerous, so be careful not to get hurt.”

“Yes…”

Harriet got up from where she sat. It seemed like she would do what was asked of her, even while she felt rather depressed.

“Ellen and Cliffman. Could you help set up the camp as Adelia requested?”

“Yes.”

“Okay.”

Ellen and Cliffman were the strongest in this class in terms of physical strength. So it was only right for those two to be in charge of the physical labor.

There seemed to be a bigger picture gradually coming together in Bertus' mind. Was he the type that, if told one thing, would realize two? Or maybe it was just his mentality slowly recovering, leading to his sudden motivation. He was someone that would become active as soon as he got someone to order around. Villain or not, he was a born leader.

The only ones that were not given a role for now were me, Liana de Grantz, and Heinrich von Schwarz.

"Bertus, could you leave me in charge of those two?"

At my words, Bertus tilted his head. Additionally, when they heard me ask if I could be in charge of them, both of them had some sullen expressions on their faces. Heinrich hated me, and I haven't even spoken to Liana yet, so they obviously didn't have any good reactions to my words.

"Hmm… Do you have any plans?"

"Well… I think the two of them are actually the most important out of all of us."

"……Really?"

Their expressions became quite strange after they were subjected to my sudden, uncharacteristic compliment.

* * *

Heinrich von Schwarz, Pyrokinesis.

Liana de Grantz, Electrokinesis.

These two supernatural powers were key to survival in this jungle, in my opinion.

"……What?"

Heinrich's eyes were filled with distrust, as if he only ever got lied to.

“Till when are you going to stay mad at me? We’re in the same boat here, so let’s cooperate.”

Heinrich quickly turned his head, saying that he didn’t want to deal with private things right now, even though we literally had to work together to keep our heads above water.

“……Tch.”

“…Why me?”

“Just wait. I’ll tell you everything.”

It seemed clear that Liana was just as wary of me. I didn’t want to explain everything to them just yet, while they were like this. I didn’t want to get closer to them, either.

Since the situation was the way it was, I would make as much use of them as I could. If they didn’t like it, I would make them listen, even if I had to crush them.

“From now on, we’ll be able to light fires whenever we want to. So, for now, we’ll start making some fresh drinking water.”

“…Fresh drinking water?”

“Yes, we’ll need water. You’re the only one here except Harriet who can light fires whenever he wants.”

Although, I once said that he wasn’t even as good as a flint, of course he was much better to maintain than one, though. As long as he kept his mouth shut.

“I asked Adelia to make a vapor condensing device. After that, we can keep making water.”

“…A-Are you treating me like a flint? And do you seriously think that you can order me around?”

Heinrich frowned as if he had been insulted just now, then I sighed.

I’m so fucking annoyed. Should I just hit him?

No.

Let's not make the situation worse.

"Phew… Whether you hear it from my mouth or Bertus', it doesn't matter, mate. Do you want to get us into trouble? If you don't do this, the water will run out within two days or so."

In this tropical environment, dehydration would be a serious threat. I mean, I was indeed treating him like a flint, but if we didn't do this, we would have to keep hydrate using coconuts only. After we had something like a vapor condensation machine, we could make drinking water from seawater continuously. It was a simple but important role.

Even if he told me that he didn't want to follow my orders, he'd just end up hearing the same order from Bertus shortly after.

"……I'm doing this for everyone, got it?"

"Yeah, yeah, got it. Work hard."

After having understood what I was telling him, Heinrich just disappeared as if he didn't want to speak with me any longer. Heinrich was gone, leaving only Liana de Grantz, who seemed a bit reluctant, behind.

"You have to hunt."

"Hunt?"

"Yeah."

I pointed towards the beach.

"Fishing might be the more correct term, though."

I was going for something similar to stunning fish by electrifying water with a car battery.

* * *

If I were to introduce a car battery to a pool of water or a river, all the fish within it would be stunned, floating to the surface. Of course, that was highly illegal.

However, there were no such laws in this world, and even if there were, we had to survive on this deserted island no matter what and through any means.

I took Liana to the beach.

-Shwaaaaa…

“You won’t get electrocuted or something, right?”

“That’s right.”

Liana, who was full of surprises, was basically immune to electricity. Liana still seemed quite reluctant.

“Try using your supernatural power on the water.”

“……I doubt it’ll work.”

She hesitated for a bit, but then began to concentrate. I then backed away, fearing that I might get electrocuted.

-Brzzzt! Brrrrzzzzt!

Blue electric currents flew from Liana’s hands, and were soon raging among the waves. This girl certainly had excellent control over her supernatural power.

-Shwaaa…

And, nothing really happened.

Liana clicked her tongue slightly.

“…I don’t want to get wet.”

Saying so, she slowly walked down to the water, immersing her arms into it this time.

Well, she seemed rather picky, but she did what I asked of her.

This time, she activated her ability after her hands were fully submerged in the water. Although I couldn't really see it.

Of course, there was nothing different from before. The sea was quite, and there were no stunned fish floating up. Liana looked back at me.

"I told you. It won't work."

"……Right."

I've only ever heard of car battery fishing, but I never actually tried it myself. I didn't know if it was because Liana's abilities were still lacking, or if there was some other problem. Liana came out of the water and frowned, seeing her wet shoes.

It seemed that she was royally pissed, that the only thing my request did, was get her shoes wet.

"I know what you're trying to do, but for that to happen, I would have to get close to the fish, whether by diving or swimming. My range isn't that wide. And I can't swim."

She seemed feisty, but she still seemed to properly explain things to me. How very strange.

Anyway, I thought with electricity alone, I would be able to cover a fairly wide area, even if it wouldn't affect the whole ocean. That wasn't the case.

The Korean Department of Education should make a public apology because of this.

"You can't swim… So what if I were to carry you on my back while we go in there and you electrocute… Oh, right, I'd get electrocuted as well."

"……Weren't you first ranked in the exams?"

Liana looked at me with a rather strange look. It seemed like she was doubting how someone like me could take first place. It sure was a waste, but if I couldn't use her, I wouldn't be able to catch any fish.

"What's the range of your ability?"

"5 meters."

Her output wasn't that strong at the moment. Looks like I had to struggle some more. Liana just sighed and started to tie her hair up.

"It's fine. I can just walk around the place and electrocute a fish if it gets close enough."

Liana headed towards the sea again, saying that I should go out of her way because I'd just bother her.

Liana de Grantz.

She only ever said slightly harsh and chilly things, so in the beginning, she was seen as a somewhat harsh person with a bad temper by the class.

However, later, after the separation between Class A and B got resolved, it was revealed that she wasn't actually bad-tempered. It was just the way she spoke, and since the kids from Class B didn't cross ways with Class A very often, they didn't know what kind of person she was.

That was how I set her up, but it was still strange seeing her act like that right before my eyes.

It was a subtle feeling, she being kind of nice, while still speaking pretty harshly.

As she entered the water, Liana suddenly turned back and looked at me.

"Come to think of it, I can't even touch fish."

Another absurd characteristic I gave her was that she was clumsy.

CHAPTER 94

Although Liana said that she wasn't able to even touch fish, she decided that this wasn't a situation in which she could make such excuses, so she eventually walked back towards the ocean again.

I had never been to a tropical resort in any of my lifes. So, I never imagined that I would end up witnessing such beautiful scenery on an uninhabited island like this.

Of course, this scenery was really breathtaking, but I didn't have any time to enjoy it at the moment.

"Get out of the way! It's falling!"

"Uwah!"

-Wruuuush!

After the tree began to fall into one direction it made a thunderous sound as it hit the ground.

Harriet just felled a tree, however she seemed to be the most confused about that.

"Gyaaaa! Bugs! There are buuuuugs!"

Or more like she was busy being terrified of the bugs that fell from said tree. She was probably the one most uncomfortable with this situation, in many ways, but we needed her the most as well, as she was the only one that had many different types of magic spells available to her.

"I think…… this should be enough trees. Now… let's cut them smaller together."

At Adelia's words, Harriet nodded helplessly.

She managed to fell 5 trees. Now those trees had to be trimmed down and then turned into either pillars or flooring. Cliffman was cutting down some bushes to create a road in the jungle, and Ellen was cutting the trees with an axe.

Palm leaves and vines were still in the process of being procured, and Bertus was directing the workers and helping out when needed.

“What’s going on over there?”

Bertus seemed to be curious about Class B’s progress.

“Looks like they’re doing the same thing as us.”

Class B, located on a distant place along the coast, could be seen bustling about making something as well

“Just what is that special condition…”

If we were able to meet a specific condition, we could end this mission early, and we’d receive additional points. If we didn’t want to stay here for a long time, it would be better if we explored the island a bit more.

Even Bertus didn’t want to stay in this place for too long. That was why he’d much rather find a way to fulfill that condition.

“Reinhardt. Well…”

After trying to tell me something, Bertus just sighed.

“No. Forget it. We don’t even know what it is, so it would be foolish to just blindly fumble about. Let’s not do anything dangerous for now. Let’s think more about this after we complete our camp.”

No matter how much I went into the jungle without any hesitation just a few minutes ago, it seemed like he didn’t want to burden me with that.

After talking for a bit, Bertus and I began to roll away the trees.

-Someone catch this!

Then an urgent voice could be heard from the beach.

* * *

“Wow…”

“What’s that…?”

“Why is it so big?”

“Eww! It’s so gross!”

Liana caught something, but she wasn’t able to touch it herself, so when they saw me bringing that thing to the camp, everyone just stopped working, standing there in a daze. Harriet and Liana were evidently grossed out by it.

It wasn’t a fish.

We caught something that looked similar to a crayfish. It was five times bigger than a common lobster.

“This thing is absolutely delicious!”

Ellen nodded violently when she heard me say that. She seemed to be thinking about devouring it already.

It went without saying that the bigger the crustacean was, the better it tasted.

“…I think we should first check if this is edible or not.”

Bertus expressed some concerns and tried to calm me down, who had his eyes completely focused on that delicacy that unexpectedly appeared before me.

“Won’t it be fine if we just cook it well?”

“Uhmm… Still, we don’t know if it’s poisonous or not.”

In fact, Bertus’ concern about what would happen if we were to eat something unknown like that was completely rational in this environment.

“I mean, the teachers are probably watching us from somewhere, they’d probably give us a warning, if we were to try to eat something weird.”

If the kids were to try to eat something like a poisonous mushroom because they

were just that hungry they would be stopped immediately. This wasn't an actual live-or-die situation, but only a mission. Going by that reasoning, Bertus seemed to agree with me.

"But how do we prepare this?"

Its taste aside, Liana seemed terrified at how disgusting it looked. She was probably someone with Kabourophobia.

"Why are you making this so complicated? We'll just cook it, simple as that."

The nobles, especially the girls, grimaced as they imagined grilling something over an open fire in this place.

"But one of these won't be enough."

We caught a huge lobster, but this wasn't enough to feed 11 people. At Bertus' words, Liana, who had been drinking some water from her canteen, seemed to feel like they were directed at her.

"…I'll go back."

It seemed like she was going to a battlefield, having to catch something she couldn't even touch. By the way, everyone was sweating buckets as all of them had to do their assigned jobs in this extreme heat. So, everyone was guzzling water from their canteens, not knowing that it was quite the waste.

"You'll regret it, if you don't conserve your water."

"Isn't it okay since you gathered those coconuts?"

Kono Lint's nonchalant remarks earned a glare from me.

"Hey, d'ya think it's easy climbing trees? You wanna do it?"

"H-huh? N-no, that's not…"

He said it so easily, because it wasn't him who picked those coconuts…

No.

Wait a sec.

Number 8, Kono Lint.

His ability was teleportation.

"…Come to think of it, you really should be the one to pick them."

If he used his ability, he'd get naked as a side effect.

So if no one was watching, there wouldn't be a problem with him using it, right?

"From now on you'll be in charge of gathering coconuts."

"H-huuuuuh?"

As everyone in class knew the side effects of Kono Lint's ability, everyone started laughing.

* * *

After making Kono Lint the designated coconut shuttle, I entered the jungle alone.

I didn't know how it'll go, but honestly, I wasn't that interested whether we won or lost in this group mission. The condition of completing my quest was to survive, it didn't mention anything about winning.

As long as we could hold out until Friday, I would receive my achievement points, so Class A didn't have to win for that.

Also I kind of wanted Charlotte to win.

So I didn't really assert any conditions myself. I didn't even think this would be possible to begin with.

I wasn't confident in my archery skills, so I was currently carrying around a machete and three javelins.

Although I wasn't sure I'd actually be able to do some hunting, I still took them with me.

However, my current goal wasn't to hunt for food but to secure a new fresh water source.

The island was quite large and also had some mountains. Therefore, if I were to search carefully, I'd be able to find a water flow. Then, instead of having to bother constantly picking coconuts, we could just fetch water from there.

I was trying to find it because I actually knew that it existed somewhere around here. Of course, I didn't exactly know where it was.

"Phew…"

I had to somehow get through this thick forest, so my stamina consumption was extremely high. In fact, it was highly difficult to even make ten consecutive steps. Of course, my path wasn't completely covered in vines, so I could navigate myself quite well.

After walking for some time, I finally came to a halt.

I might end up exhausted and unable to move, so I decided to go back first, after I cleared a significant portion of the path.

-Kwiiiiiik!

And, then the cry of some animal rang out from somewhere.

Seeing that it was screaming, it didn't seem like this was normal. I looked towards the direction the cry came from and saw someone running through the jungle chasing something.

-Fling!

-Kwiiiik!

The scream of the beast was getting louder as someone was chasing after it with a bow, shooting arrows at it and actually hitting.

It was a girl with long braided hair fluttering behind her who was running through the forest like a squirrel.

It was B-9, Delphine Izadra who had an archery talent.

-Fllling! Fling!

-Kweeeek!

Apparently the chased beast had fallen, as the girl holding a bow also stopped her charge.

Not only was she able to rush through the jungle as if she was flying, she was also able to shoot down a beast that was running with all its might.

She was Ludwig's best friend as well as one of the main heroines of this novel.

"……How can I take this back?"

She caught something, but it seemed like she didn't know how she'd take it back.

"Hey, should I help you?"

"Ah… Huh? Who's there?"

Delphine was startled when she suddenly heard an unfamiliar voice. When she saw it was me, her expression softened slightly.

"A-ah… Reinhardt… That was you just now, right?"

I frequently came to Class B's dorm, so even if we didn't talk directly, she had at least seen my face before.

"What? Did you catch that big thing?"

It was a pig like thing almost the size of a large dog. It had been hit by four arrows, and one of them was lodged in its head.

"If it's too hard for you to carry alone, I could help you."

"Oh… Yes, please! Thank you."

She caught it, but wasn't sure how to carry it back, so she felt quite fortunate meeting

me here.

* * *

Her and I took a short break while dragging the dead pig behind us.

“Ah… It’s quite heavy…”

“Yeah…”

How could it be so difficult to move a dead beast?

“Your archery is no joke, you know?”

To be exact, it was amazing how she was able to run around and shoot arrows at the same time. Delphine smiled at my words.

“I’m used to it.”

“Really?”

“Yep, I’m from Talprad. Almost everyone there learns how to hunt from a young age.”

“Ah… Is that so?”

Of course, this was something I was already aware of.

Delphine Izadra came from a long line of hunters calling the mountainous country, Talprard, located in the northern part of the Empire, their home. Talprad was quite known for every citizen to know how to use a bow, and even among them, Delphine was considered a prodigy.

That was why she was able to enter Temple’s Royal Class with only her archery talent.

She had been out hunting ever since she was a child, moving through rough terrain, so she took to this situation like a fish to water.

Although she only had her archery right now, she’d later become able to use an unusual power called Spirit Magic.

In fact, there was this setting that the hunters of Talprad actually inherited the blood of elves, who had been annihilated a long time ago. Delphine inherited their power the strongest, so she had tremendous talent for archery, as well as an affinity with spirits which would develop later on.

Of course, it would still take a long time for her to awaken that talent.

Seeing as she was best friends with Ludwig, she was quite the kind and affable person. It didn't seem like she was scared of my or anything. I mean, she did see me frequenting Class B's dorm quite often after all.

"What are you guys up to? Is everything going well?"

"Well, we're doing this and that, but I have no idea how it'll turn out."

"Really? There are so many outstanding students in Class A, so I'm sure everything will turn out well."

Originally, Class A and B were supposed to be bitter enemies. However, because I tanked all the aggro since the start of the school year, the students from Class A didn't hate Class B all that much, even though they still looked down on them a bit. The students of Class B didn't hate Class A because they were just that good-natured.

So, the relationship between the two classes wasn't as bad as in the original, or actually it wasn't bad at all, so that was why we were able to casually ask questions like that during this cooperative mission.

As Delphine said, Class A was definitely full of bright people. However, they were just as whiny as they were talented, so I was rather uncertain about the outcome.

"After tonight, I bet there'll be more than one or two kids that will feel like they're about to die."

"Really? Well… You're right. I'm used to camping, but I'm still worried for the others."

Delphine had hunted a lot in the past, so she was used to sleeping in the open. However, she was worried about the others, who aren't as experienced. That was why she jumped into the forest right away to secure some food.

After taking some breaks in between, we were finally able to drag the pig to the

beach where Class B's camp was located.

"Phew… Good job. Thank you, Reinhardt."

Delphine smiled brightly as she stepped on the beach. If she had been alone, she wouldn't have been able to bring the pig along.

"Wha… Wha-what is this?"

All the Class B kids who had been struggling to create a camp were shocked to see that a pig had been caught.

"Wow… How did you do this?… Huh? Reinhardt? What brings you here?"

And just as Bertus was leading Class A, Charlotte was leading Class B. She smiled seeing the pig we dragged here, but she was just as surprised seeing me here.

* * *

With her wavy, pretty, blonde hair tied up in a ponytail, she walked around with the sleeves of her shirt and the legs of her pants rolled up.

Seeing that her palms were also quite dirty, it seemed like she was also actively participating.

"Ah, we met inside the jungle and he helped me move that thing. If I had been alone, I wouldn't have been able to drag it all the way here."

At Delphine's words, the expressions on the Class-B student's faces, Charlotte's included, became strange.

He did what now?

That was what everyone's expression was saying.

Charlotte just sighed heavily and smiled.

"Reinhardt… Although this is a cooperative mission, it's still a competition. How could you just go and help the other team?"

She rebuked her opponent for helping her. I laughed at Charlotte's words.

"No way. How could I work without receiving anything in return?"

Charlotte burst into laughter when I asked them if I could take one of the pig's legs as a reward.

"What do you mean, reward? So you did have ulterior motives after all, huh? Well, Delphine caught it, so the decision is hers to make."

Delphine froze up hearing Charlotte's words.

"Well… Sure, we already have enough anyway."

Delphine pointed towards the beach and chuckled.

-Woah!

-Guuuuuys! I caught another ooooone!

"Because a certain idiot is about to gather up enough food for the whole week in just a single day."

I could see Ludwig holding a big fish stuck on a javelin, shouting excitedly.

CHAPTER 95

Delphine did the dismantling herself. Perhaps because she had hunted a lot in the past, she was also good at handling knives. There were some who watched her with interest, and others who couldn't watch her because the scene was too gory.

Even though I'd much rather not watch, I kept my eyes on her, trying to internalize how she was doing it.

I mean, there was no one among Class A's precious kids who could do something like this. I didn't either, so I watched.

"Wow… Is it as difficult as it looks?"

"Hmm, definitely. I don't know how to do it properly either. I'm just trying to follow what the adults did before."

After removing the pig's intestines, Delphine hung the pig upside down and slit its neck to remove the blood. She naturally removed the arrow from its skull as well.

I felt kind of sick, seeing the blood dripping down its throat. Delphine, who did this by herself, had her hands completely stained in blood.

But this was…

I knew it would be fine.

However, there were no parasites in there, right? Although I set it up as there being "no such problems", was it really fine? We could just eat it if we cooked it well, right?

"It takes some time to remove the blood and skin. If you come by later, I'll give you your share."

"Oh, is that so? Okay then."

As I was about to go back, Ludwig came over with his shirt off and a javelin with a fish stuck on it in his hand, his eyes wide open in surprise.

“Woah… Delphine! What’s going on here? Urgh! There’s so much blood. Huh? Reinhardt?”

He seemed to be a little surprised to find me here.

“Welcome. Do you want some fish? To be honest, I think we got a bit too much.”

Of course, our kind-hearted Ludwig just gave me the fish he caught not too long ago.

No one even seemed to care that he wanted to give that fish to me.

When I looked over to their bonfire, I could see fish stuck on skewers getting grilled. B-2 Louis Ankton was watching over them, with an expression on his face that seemed to say: “Why do I have to do this?”

It definitely looked like they had a lot.

This survival mission was originally intended to show that Class B was stronger in praxis. It was supposed to showcase that even though Class A had a lot of talented students, they were rather reluctant to do tough jobs, while the students of Class B, who were seen as less talented, knew better how to make the best use of what they got.

That’s right.

There were many practically inclined kids in Class B. There wasn’t anyone among them that would go: “Oh my, why should my noble self have to do something like this?”. Hence, it was pretty much inevitable that they would perform better than Class A.

“Thanks. I’ll eat it well.”

Ludwig smiled at my words, saying that I should tell him if we didn’t have enough.

“Jeez. Looks like everyone has forgotten that this is a competition.”

Seeing this, Charlotte only shook her head, but I could see that her eyes contained some joy.

“Come get the meat later!”

Delphine shouted as I was on my way back.

It seemed that her preconceived notions about me had been completely erased after I merely helped her move that pig.

* * *

"……How did you get that?"

Bertus had a rather sickly expression when I told him that I was given that fish.

"Uh, they just said that they had too many."

"How did you get to their camp?"

"Ah, Delphine caught a pig in the jungle, and I helped her carry it back because it was too heavy for her. So we decided that I would get part of its meat later on."

"There are normal pet pigs in there?"

Bertus seemed shocked that there were pigs in the jungle, before he could even process that I helped Class B. It was the same for the others.

"Doesn't that mean that there are dangerous animals in there? What if we get attacked late at night?"

It was Cayer whining around.

Hey, buddy, pigs aren't exactly 'dangerous animals', however, wild boars could be pretty dangerous.

"It seems like we have to keep watch at night then."

Ever since he heard that there were pigs inside the jungle, Bertus seemed to have become very vigilant already.

"Okay, Reinhardt, well… Securing that raw meat itself is indeed beneficial."

Deciding not to think about it any further, Bertus seemed to have chosen to think that it was a good thing that I helped Class B secure more food for our class.

“By the way, is it ready?”

“I think it’s pretty much complete.”

It didn’t entirely look like home yet.

“It’s quite surprising that making something like that was much more realistic than I initially thought.”

Harriet was sweating profusely, but she still continued to cut logs with her magic.

They constructed it by putting the wooden logs they had cut against each other. Like a camera tripod. The main pillar was reinforced by tying vines around it to prevent everything from collapsing, and the sides were bound together by vines as well. Then palm leaves were inserted to create walls.

“I think about two people can sleep in there at the same time.”

I nodded at Adelia’s words. It was cramped, but it was enough for two people to sleep in there. Since we were eleven people, we had to make either six more or five more, leaving three people to share a single hut.

If we tried to construct larger huts, there was a bigger risk of them collapsing, so it seemed like the right choice to make smaller ones. Adelia seemed to have a lot of things to worry about.

“Rain will probably leak through the roof…”

“We’ll just have to bear with that.”

Making a completely waterproof cabin in this situation was pretty much impossible. Just knowing that we now had a place to lie down in and rest was good enough. Adelia seemed to be struggling with how to make this place a more bearable environment for us.

“Still, if we were able to cut the logs into planks, we might be able to make something similar to flooring."

Of course, the only problem was that Harriet had to do that all alone. I passed the construction site and headed to the beach.

There was our person responsible for the fire, Heinrich von Schwarz, keeping the simple distillation device running. In this sweltering heat, he continuously picked up firewood to keep the bonfire running, and lit the fire again if it ever went out.

Perhaps it was because of the heat; but his face, that usually had a vain look to it, seemed rather ripe. He just continued to stare on with dissatisfaction, too tired to even argue.

The small pot was hanging in the bigger pot and had quite a bit of water in it. It wasn't enough to drink, but he had to keep it running so that everyone wouldn't run out of water. He just had to hold on until I found the water source in the jungle.

"What's with the fish?"

"I got it."

"You got it?"

"Yeah."

I put the fish on a large palm leaf as a substitute for a chopping board and started to fillet it.

I didn't know how to do it exactly, but I had a rough idea.

-Chop!

"Urgh!"

When I chopped off the fish's head, Heinrich freaked out. Ignoring the last struggles of the flopping fish, I gutted it.

I removed the bladder and intestines, then descaled it.

I wasn't sure what kind of fish this was, but it should be edible. It kind of looked like a sea bream.

Heinrich looked at me, terrified, as I calmly cut up the fish next to him.

I put the fish on a skewer I prepared beforehand, and stuck it into the ground next to

the bonfire on which the pot was steaming.

“Tell me when it’s done. It’s going to take some time. Oh, and if there’s any salt in that pot, collect it. We don’t have any condiments, so we should at least put some salt on it.”

“H-Huh… Okay.”

The one with the knife in his hand was indeed the boss, so Heinrich replied straight away.

* * *

Everyone worked as if they were possessed, even if they didn’t have much motivation, so time went by quickly.

The water canteens, which everyone received one of, were immediately emptied.

However, we still had the distilled water, and since Kono Lint had continued to harvest some coconuts, we had sufficient ways to keep us hydrated.

“……It doesn’t taste as delicious as it looks.”

“I think it's delicious, though.”

“It’s only because of the heat, that’s all."

Kono Lint and Erich expressed their opinions about the taste of the coconuts. Whether they liked it or not, they had to keep drinking from them until we found a new water source.

Fortunately, Liana de Grantz was able to stun a few more fish by electrocuting them, although she still couldn’t touch them. Nevertheless, we were able to get a total of five fish that day.

So, on the first day, at sunset, after we finished constructing the camp, we made a big bonfire in the middle of it and started grilling the fish and lobster. I also started grilling the pig legs I obtained from Class B.

I sprinkled everything with salt before grilling them.

“…There are no… forks and knives.”

Harriet muttered softly with a sullen expression on her face.

"What do you expect in a place where we have to use leaves as plates?”

“……”

Even though I criticized her like that, Harriet didn’t even answer; that was how depressed she was. Even though she was in that much of a daze, she actually worked the hardest today. Without her magic, it might not have been possible to construct this camp.

Harriet just looked towards the distant shore and pouted.

“What are those guys even doing? What is so fun about this?!”

At Class B’s camp, after their food was ready, most of them jumped right into the sea and played around. No matter what the future might hold for them, they’d do their best to enjoy it.

We, on the other hand, were just sitting around the bonfire somberly. Even though everyone was hungry and we actually had some food, they didn’t really look like they looked forward to eating it.

“Everyone, I understand that you are having a hard time. I know you find it unpleasant sleeping here and eating things like this.”

In the end, Bertus had to step forward.

"However, this is our first group mission. We don’t know what other missions we have to face in the future, but we still shouldn’t fail our very first mission, right?”

He was smiling, but everyone knew that Bertus was one of the people who suffered the most under these conditions, so there was no one who dared to make a fuss in front of him.

Bertus picked up a skewered fish, ate a little of it to make sure it wasn’t too hot, and began to properly bite into it.

Everyone stared blankly at the Imperial Prince, eating a fish like a beggar on a deserted island.

“It’s good to eat.”

Bertus smiled with fish oil around his mouth.

“So, let’s eat.”

Bertus chose to take the first step to stop the high-and-mighty nobles of Class A from being fussy.

Maybe it was fine, even if he was someone who wore a perfect mask on his face as well as on his heart. Charlotte was someone like that as well, after all.

I really didn't know anymore.

* * *

Bertus distributed the cooked food to all the class members. He knew, after all, that they’d have to eat it, if it was something he gave to them.

“……”

Harriet took a bite out of the gigantic lobster’s meat, then her eyes widened. She then looked at Adelia, who was seated next to her, and ate the same thing.

Both of them looked surprised. They probably felt the same way.

I was pretty sure that both of them had eaten lobster before, but they probably had never eaten one of such a monstrous size before.

“I feel kind of bad because he was right…”

Harriet murmured in a rather desperate tone, feeling a sense of defeat, probably because she found the lobster delicious. Although it was huge, if divided in 11 pieces, it was just a small amount of food. While she ate only half of the fish Bertus gave her, it seemed like she liked the lobster a lot.

“……”

It looked like she was slowly regaining her appetite.

“Hey.”

“……What?”

“Eat it.”

I gave Harriet a wooden skewer with bundled lobster meat on it. Her eyes widened.

“W-Why are you giving this to me?"

“Ah, don’t ask me stupid questions, just eat it. I have no energy to argue with you.”

When I forcibly shoved it towards her, she accepted it silently.

She suffered the most today. She was also the one least used to this kind of environment. She would continue to have a hard time during this mission, so I decided to take care of her a bit.

Even if one felt sad and depressed, you should still eat well if one had food sitting before yourself.

“……”

Harriet seemed thoroughly exhausted; she simply began to nibble on the lobster meat I gave her.

And then.

“Ellen? Where are you going so suddenly?"

Ellen Artorius suddenly jumped up from where she sat and walked off somewhere. Bertus, seemingly surprised, called Ellen, but she didn’t answer him. She just picked up a javelin and eventually ran off.

“Wha… What is she doing…?`”

Harriet looked towards Ellen, who suddenly jumped into the sea, colored red by the sunset.

“Something great.”

I kind of knew what she was doing.

About 30 minutes later, Ellen Artorius came back with three similar lobsters as the one we just ate on her javelin.

"Wha… What is she?"

Everyone started to reevaluate the pretty Ellen, looking at her with shocked eyes.

CHAPTER 96

In the end, thanks to Ellen, who spontaneously went on an evening hunt, everyone was able to stuff themselves with lobster meat.

Lobster just tasted better than grilled fish or the chewy pig legs, which irritated those nobles' picky taste buds.

“I… I’m full…”

At that moment, everyone felt so blessed, even while they were still stuck on this uninhabited island and undergoing a survival mission.

Of course, Ellen was still eating the wild boar meat, slicing it with a knife.

“You’re amazing, Ellen. We lived thanks to you.”

Bertus smiled after finishing his food with a satisfied expression on his face, then Ellen pointed towards the beach.

“There were a lot of very big clams as well."

“Oh really? That’s good.”

It looked like she was already thinking about what to eat tomorrow.

Pigs ate while thinking about what they’d eat next.

Everyone probably thought that Ellen was a calm and capable person, but, in reality, they didn’t actually know all that much about Ellen.

But today, they got to know Ellen a bit more.

They saw her suddenly jumping up after eating, silently, going to the beach to hunt. That was how they found out that she was actually pretty good at hunting. When she was helping chop the wood, they witnessed just how powerful her axe swings were.

-Munch

They also got to know her bottomless appetite.

Up until now, they might have thought that she ate slightly more than others when we sat together in the dining hall, but today they got to see just how much she could eat.

“I… I did see her eat before, but she sure does eat a lot.”

Harriet muttered blankly. She felt strange that Ellen still managed to maintain her monstrous appetite even in this kind of situation.

“Hey, eat this.”

“Wha… What is that?”

“It’s edible. Try it.”

Harriet carefully took a bite out of that thing that looked like a white squid leg, then her expression turned bizarre.

“W-What is this? Is this coconut?”

“Yeah. You shouldn’t waste any food.”

Harriet, who ate some coconut flesh, swallowed after chewing on it a bit. Everyone just stared at me while I was eating the coconut’s insides.

“You can eat this too, so don’t just throw it away. Use a knife or something to cut it out and eat it.”

Then, one by one, they drank some coconut water with rather exhausted and casual expressions, and began to collect the empty shells.

* * *

The sun set completely, transitioning to night.

“Everyone worked hard today. Don’t go out into the forest at night. It’s dangerous.

Let's just stay around the beach. Those who want to sleep early should go sleep first."

As soon as we finished eating, Bertus naturally started to take control of his classmates.

"And we will set up a night patrol. We don't know what might happen. I think it would be best if we take turns standing guard. We'll switch after 1 hour has passed. Although I'm not sure how to measure time in this place…"

I heard that one can tell the time by watching the night sky, but do we have anyone here who can do that?

"I think… it's about 8pm right now."

Adelia, who had been blankly staring at the sky, piped up.

"Oh, you're able to tell the time. That's a relief. Then, let's make 10pm our official bedtime. From that time on, every hour, one of us will stand guard in order of our class number. Adelia can't keep checking the time, so I shall leave the measuring of the time to each of you."

In other words: "End your shift when you think it has been an hour."

That might seem rather vague, but there was no other way.

Going by that, Bertus would be the first to stand guard, and I'd be the last. I mean, being last didn't feel like I'd be standing guard at all.

"Now, everyone, just keep in mind that you shouldn't go into the forest. Those who don't have to stand guard should try to sleep well, and those that are to stand guard, try to rest."

In this extreme situation, he had to spend the first night struggling to control and soothe these mentally exhausted children.

The most weary one out of all of us would probably be no one else, but Bertus though.

* * *

Most of my classmates must have been extremely exhausted, both mentally and physically. Therefore, even the kids who asked how they would be able to even sleep in something like this, or what they'd do if insects got in there, went into that cramped tripod hut, but didn't come out again.

They probably fell asleep as soon as they lay down on the floor. Fatigue could beat anything.

As for Heinrich, he was still managing the fire, making distilled water, and filling the emptied canteens.

As he spent the day, he realized just how important water was, so that was probably why he came to think that what he was doing was very important.

It was a moonless night, so one could see a huge amount of stars. It looked like the Milky Way.

I moved closer to the beach and sat down. I watched the clear water and the night sky.

This really was a scenery to kill for. Now I was finally able to enjoy this landscape with a little less to worry about.

Class B's camp still looked really lively. It almost seemed like they came here for the sole purpose of playing around.

"Phew… Why are these guys wasting their stamina like that?"

-Slump

Bertus sat next to me after he saw me sitting here.

"Looks like they still have a lot of energy left."

"Sigh… I envy them."

What Bertus said was rather vague. Maybe he was envious of them for being able to enjoy this situation so much, or that they still had so much energy left to play till this late at night.

“Reinhardt, you did well today.”

“Well, I don’t know.”

“If not for you and Ellen suddenly going into the jungle, we all would have given up right then and there.”

As soon as I took some abrupt actions, the kids, who had been set on giving up, faltered, and above all, Bertus stopped thinking of giving up.

“One side is constantly crying ‘Why does my noble self have to do this? How could that make any sense’…

I was like that as well… And then we have the other side, that seems so excited by all this, that it makes it seem as if they came here for vacation and having the time of their life…”

Class A, who was uncomfortable with this.

Class B, who was thoroughly enjoying this.

Even Bertus could feel this gap now.

“…This isn’t even a competition anymore.”

He smiled bitterly. We were struggling while they were enjoying this. The result of the mission seemed quite obvious, even if the mission had only just begun.

In a way, he looked kind of weak. It seemed like Bertus was so mentally exhausted to the point that he had to say such things. Although it was a fabricated situation, in the end, getting food, clean clothing and shelter were very difficult on this uninhabited island.

However, Bertus would never admit that he was stressed out because of this inconvenient situation.

If he did, he would admit that he was merely that small of a human being. It would hurt his pride.

“Reinhardt.”

“Hm?”

“I’m glad to have you here.”

That certainly sounded sincere.

* * *

Class A consisted of 7 boys and 4 girls.

There were 6 completed huts.

So two people had to share one hut, but one of the huts could be inhabited by just one person. That hut went to Bertus. He was playing the role of the leader in this situation; moreover, he was a Prince after all.

Of course, everyone knew that this wasn’t the best.

It was still early in the morning. Cayer Vioden, the one standing guard before me, woke me up. It was obvious that he had major problems sleeping in a place like this.

“Keep filling the pot with water, and if you notice anything dangerous, wake everyone up, also don’t turn out the fire. That’s all you gotta do.”

“Okay.”

He still hated me, but I didn’t care about that guy anymore. Honestly, from my point of view, he was nothing more than a small fry, so I didn’t really like or hate him.

The fire was still burning as the one on guard would keep it running. As I saw Cayer crawling into his hut, I left mine and threw the remaining wood into the fire.

I didn’t have to wake anyone else up because I was the last on guard duty. Well, there wasn’t any set wake-up time, so there was no need for me to wake anyone up just because it was bright outside. They’d just have to wake up on their own.

The huts were built circularly around the bonfire.

The six bell shaped huts had their entrances slightly obscured by palm leaves, but one could still look into them a little.

Everyone was sleeping in them as if dead. After pouring some seawater into the pot, and replenishing the firewood, I had nothing more to do.

How long has it been?

-Rustle.

I could hear a rustling sound coming from one of the huts, then I saw someone poking their head out of the entrance.

“Did you see anything?"

"No."

A disheveled Liana de Grantz appeared from her hut.

She crawled out of it and staggered to her feet. Her whole body seemed to creak. Why did she come out, when she evidently hadn’t slept enough?

Then she suddenly started walking towards the forest.

"Hey, where are you going?"

She ignored my words and just walked in silence.

“Don’t go into the jungle. It’s still dark outside."

“What is it? Why are you talking…”

-Clasp!

I grabbed her arm. Then she violently shook me off and looked at me.

Her eyes seemed so cold, as if she could freeze me by just looking at me.

What’s going on?

Did I do something wrong?”

“I’m going to go shit. Are we done?”

With that, she disappeared into the jungle, seeming like she would kill me if I were to speak to her any longer. It was probably very urgent, seeing as she blurted it out like that.

* * *

The girl that went on her merry way to shit, didn't come back.

"……What's going on?"

I quietly mumbled to myself in front of the campfire. Did something happen to her? Or was she just constipated?

If something happened to her, I would have to go to help her, but what if I just ended up embarrassing her? Wouldn't that leave a permanent scar on the young lady's psyche?

No, but wasn't it really strange for her to not come back after more than 20 minutes had passed? I didn't hear her scream, though. Or was she just too tired and fell asleep right when she did her business?

No, that can't be.

Or maybe?

Was there really a problem?

I got up from where I sat and walked towards the jungle.

Maybe she was just too embarrassed to say that she had a problem.

"If you're alright, spark once! If there's a problem, spark twice! If you don't do anything, I'll just go in!"

It was quiet for a while.

And then.

-Brzzt! Brzzt!

I could see electric sparks flickering in the forest. Did she go in that deep?

She was still conscious, but something was wrong.

I had a feeling what it was.

“Oh, erm. Do you need something to clean your…”

-Brzzt!

As soon as I got there, sparks flashed before me.

That idiot just went in without thinking about that matter because she had to go urgently, but now she realized that there was nothing to clean herself with.

"Hey! Just wipe it off with a nearby leaf! There isn’t much else here!”

-Brzzt! Brzzt! Brzzt! Brzzt! Brzzt!

I didn’t really know what she meant with that, but what I could read out of it was that I shouldn’t talk nonsense. There wasn’t any toilet paper here, you know? She should ask for something more reasonable.

“Or do you want me to get you some seawater?”

-……

After some silence.

-Brzzt!

She sparked once.

* * *

I put some seawater in the medium-sized pot, went close to the spot where I believed her to be, and carefully placed it down.

“……You can use it. But be careful… We still need it to cook and stuff… Okay?”

There was no reply, but we just tacitly agreed.

After some time, Liana emerged with an empty pot.

She looked like someone, who had their base dignity as a human being severely trampled on.

This must have been an unbearable experience for the young lady, someone who grew up protected and held dear by her family.

What the hell did these guys even think, giving them that kind of mission? It should have been her who felt most embarrassed about this, but here I felt even more ashamed on her behalf.

As if she walked forward like a marionette controlled by somebody else, she began to sob and went towards the beach, not even looking at me.

Then she just silently washed the pot in the sea.

Her butt was slightly wet.

“I… want to give up.”

That was what she told me as she put the pot back in its original place.

The pot was definitely well-cleaned.

But I decided I won’t eat from it anyway.

Never.

That was the resolution I made.

Anyway, after she did something like that, it seemed like she fully realized our current reality.

A seventeen-year-old girl who came from a noble family, never worrying about money, had to go through something like this. I couldn’t even ask her to not give up.

I mean, even Bertus would feel the same way.

“Well… Erm, wouldn’t it be a waste to give up after you’ve done something like this?”

If you didn’t want to do something like that, you should’ve just given up sooner. At my words, Liana looked at me with a clear expression.

“……Is that so?”

“Y-Yeah. I mean, wouldn’t it be rather unfair if you gave up after suffering like that, making your suffering invalid?”

“……”

Looking at Liana, I realized that if she felt so ashamed it went even beyond shame, her face wouldn’t blush, she’d just get very quiet.

“Yeah, I’ve already defiled my body…”

“……Huh?”

She suddenly made such a self-deprecating comment and then crept back into her hut.

Resignation, conviction, and self-suggestion.

I was looking at an unprecedented phenomenon in which someone found conviction out of desperation.

I already rolled in shit. I’m already dirty. So what does it matter anymore?

What level of self-suggestion even was this?

-Sniffle

After a while, I could hear something that sounded like snoring from Liana’s hut, but I couldn’t tell if it was actually snoring or crying.

Just what is shit…?

I was contemplating such things under the beautiful night sky dotted with brilliant stars.

It was a rather thought-provoking night.

* * *

Then, after a long time passed.

-Rustle

I heard rustling from another hut. From it someone appeared.

“R-Reinhardt…”

It was none other than Harriet who suddenly called out to me.

She was staring at me with a look on her face, as if she was about to cry.

"W-What should I do…?“

She looked at me as if this matter was pretty urgent. Even so, it seemed like she thought that I would absolutely help her out after I took care of her for a bit. I didn’t know if it was because of her useless pride, but looking at her face, it seemed like she wanted to ask me to do something. She didn’t say anything at first, however.

That look was also quite cute, but in a different way. A bit pitiable.

There was nothing more difficult than having to watch Harriet being like that.

“Th-This is…?”

“Get some water.”

I quietly put a medium-sized pot into her hands.

CHAPTER 97

That girl was so afraid of going alone into the forest, she just stood there in front of it for a considerable amount of time.

And she kept looking back at me.

I knew she wanted to ask me if I could go with her, but I also knew that much worse things would happen if I were to go with her.

Eventually, Harriet went alone into the jungle.

"……"

"……"

Harriet, who was prone to blushing, returned with a staggering complexion after she finished.

She also quietly went to the beach, washed the pot thoroughly, and, seeming as if she had given up on everything, put the pot back in its place.

This pot.

Shall never be used.

"…I-If you tease me with this… If you make fun of me, I'll… I'll really, really die."

I didn't say anything to her, but Harriet, who felt like she had stepped into a trap, just looked at me.

Tears pooled in the corner of her eyes, while her face was completely white. She seemed exhausted. I could clearly feel her sense of shame just by Harriet saying that she'd die if I were to tease her, rather than that she would kill me.

If you tease me with this, I'll die. Do you really want to see me die? Do you hate me that much?

That was the type of expression Harriet showed me.

I had no intention of teasing her with this. If I were to tease her, I might hurt her for real.

I mean, I am a bastard, but I'm not that much of a bastard.

"Huh? Did something happen? If you have no business here anymore, you should go to sleep."

As she saw me pretending as if nothing had happened, Harriet eventually shed some tears.

"Thank you…"

Harriet wiped her eyes with her hands.

No, you…

That hand.

Well.

I shouldn't make fun of her, even if it was just in my mind.

* * *

When people were subjected to extreme stress in an environment they were completely unfamiliar with, there were usually two things that would happen.

They would either get an upset stomach, or get constipated.

In general, these things happen a lot in military training centers. It wasn't all that uncommon for said constipation to last for more than a week.

Some guys, who were lactose intolerant, just got an upset stomach because of all the milk they had to drink in the morning. Of course, there were also some that just got stomach aches.

So, at this point, it was inevitable that some of the students got some very bad

stomach aches, because of this very unfamiliar and shocking situation. Their stomachs would hurt even more, after they ate things they weren't used to as well. I'm grateful that I only ended up with constipation.

I was prone to it after all. Strangely enough, that fact hadn't changed, even after my body changed so much. Of course, I never described any of this, while I was writing this novel.

However, as soon as this became reality, I came to a realization.

The hardest thing in this group mission wasn't actually survival, but pooping.

How gracious it was to have toilet paper.

What a blessing it was to have fresh underwear to change into.

That morning.

Those, who had been shamed by having to do their business like that, seemed to be mentally exhausted in a different way from yesterday. Their expressions were ash white, as if they were completely burned out.

The female students seemed to feel particularly embarrassed.

Of course, there was also the desperate wish to wash up etched into their faces. It was the same for me.

"What? Did something happen last night?"

Bertus looked at Liana and Harriet, whose expressions were the worst, and asked if they were sick.

"Huh? Ah, no… Sleeping was just uncomfortable. That's all…"

"Nothing happened."

As they turned around, they didn't look at Bertus, but at me.

Harriet looked at me, as if she was pleading, 'Please! Please don't tell anyone!'.

Liana wore a determined expression, as if she was trying to tell me, that if rumors about this would start to float around, either me or her would have to give up their lives.

It was true that I was a bad guy, but I wasn't that bad.

I think, by the time I acknowledged that I was a bad guy, I had already screwed up.

"Should we eat the leftover meat from yesterday for breakfast today? Although, I don't think we can just eat it. It's probably too hard."

Kono Lint said as such, while holding the medium-sized pot.

"No!" "No!" "No!"

Me, Liana and Harriet.

The three of us shouted towards him at the same time.

* * *

Ellen, who swam out into the sea last night and caught three lobsters, and I, who was able to swim, were in charge of catching fish. Liana's style of catching fish, by waiting for them to come by and electrocuting them, took much too long.

"Are you going out into the sea?"

Harriet called out to me and Ellen when we were about to go into the sea.

"Yeah, we need to get some food for breakfast."

"……Are you good at swimming?"

"I don't know if I'm particularly good at it, but I know how to do it."

Harriet had a slightly reddened face. Apparently, during this group mission, her perception of me was changing rapidly.

"Do… Do you maybe need something like… erm"

Harriet looked at me and Ellen alternately as she spoke.

“Like underwater breathing magic.”

Oh.

You should’ve told me sooner that you could do that.

* * *

Harriet put an underwater breathing spell on me and Ellen. She said it would last about 30 to 40 minutes.

It felt strange, being able to breathe underwater. It didn’t feel like water was flowing into my lungs. It was hard to describe the feeling.

However, if the magic were to suddenly wear off at an inconvenient moment, wouldn’t I swallow all the water and drown?

Let’s plan in some time to resurface.

It wasn’t too difficult for me to open my eyes underwater.

Both me and Ellen knew how to swim, and we had the underwater breathing magic cast on us, so we could dive in a little deeper.

Then, this spectacular underwater scenery filled with coral reefs unfolded before us. For a moment, I felt like I wanted to stop to take in this scene.

Ellen gently swam under the sea, letting her limbs and waist run idle, and began to pick up the abalones attached to the rocks.

Ellen looked like a mermaid as she moved through the water.

It was pretty, but she was also able to move through the water just as freely as one.

She really was good at everything, no matter what she did.

Her swimming prowess went beyond only good; it even felt elegant.

-?

Ellen looked at me with her head tilted when she noticed that I wasn't picking up any clams.

I shook my head, trying to tell her that it was nothing. I mean, I would just stand around, staring blankly sometimes.

I picked up some abalone and clams, and then put them into a net Adelia had woven out of vines yesterday. I didn't bother picking up the ones that were too small, because they obviously would slip out.

I hoped we would catch some lobsters as the other kids ate them without complaining, but we didn't see any at all.

Wandering through the jungle required a lot of stamina, but moving underwater wasn't easy either.

If it weren't for the underwater breathing magic, it would have taken me twice as much stamina. I could feel again that Harriet's talent, which enabled her to use any type of magic skillfully, no matter from which field, was truly amazing.

I continued to collect abalone and clams. If I came across a big fish, I'd try to stab it, but there didn't seem to be any in this area.

And.

I saw Ellen fumbling around a ledge, when suddenly a camouflaged octopus appeared.

It tried to get away by shooting out jets of water, but Ellen reflexively stabbed it with her javelin.

-?

Ellen tilted her head as she looked at the octopus she had unwittingly hunted.

She showed me the end of her javelin, from which it was hanging.

-Caught a monster.

She mouthed to me underwater. Apparently, that was the first time in her life seeing an octopus.

* * *

It was only natural that everyone else was shocked by the giant octopus' appearance.

"Hi-Hiiiiiiik!"

"I feel like throwing up…"

Harriet, her expression completely pale, couldn't even look at it, and Liana just staggered into the jungle feeling nauseous after seeing it.

"……I know it's edible, but seeing it now, I don't feel like I can eat that."

Bertus had eaten octopus before, but seeing a live one made him a bit reluctant to eat it.

"If you don't want to eat it, suit yourself. I'll just eat it on my own."

Additionally, we caught a lot of clams, including abalone, so they could just grill those to eat.

I picked up the octopus by the head, removed its intestines, and rubbed salt on it. Since we had quite a bit of salt, there was no problem with me using it for something like this.

Ellen was watching me wash the octopus with sea-water.

"Is that delicious?"

"Well… I think it is."

It seemed like Ellen didn't really care about its appearance. All she needed to know was whether it was tasty or not.

After cleaning the octopus, I returned to the camp. At my request, Adelia and Harriet cut a large stone into a plate shape using their processing magic. It was a stone grill. After fixing it in a suitable position, Heinrich collected some firewood and set fire

under the rock.

When the clean stone grill gradually dried up due to the heat, I placed the clams, abalone, and octopus on top of it.

-Sizzle!

“Urg! It’s gross!”

Everyone watched the octopus twisting on the grill with terrified expressions on their faces.

In the end, it was just me and Ellen who helped themselves to the octopus.

* * *

We set up a camp, and finding food wasn’t that difficult using underwater breathing magic.

However, we were still busy.

Because humans, when their most basic needs are satisfied, crave to reach the next level.

-Craack!

“Sigh… We barely made one…”

The camp was completed, but we were now trying to upgrade it. After spending a day here, they all came to the same conclusion. That they felt extremely uncomfortable, because of the floor’s moisture.

So, our current goal was to cut some logs in half and stick them together to make flooring and put the tents on top of them. Most of the trees were cut down with magic by our two magic officials Harriet and Adelia, but the others were also busy picking up vines and palm leaves, just like yesterday.

I entered the jungle together with Ellen.

“Is there really water here?"

Ellen seemed unsure whether there was any drinking water on this deserted island. She came with me on my search for a water source on Bertus' behalf.

"The fact that there are wild animals on this island means that they have some place where they hydrate themselves. There must be something like a creek with drinkable water, or a place where rainwater gathers."

"Right."

Ellen seemed convinced by my words, assuring that there should definitely be a water source somewhere on this island. Ellen and I slowly made our way through the jungle, although not as slow as with Delphine Izadra yesterday, cutting down bushes in our way.

I was armed with three javelins and a machete, while Ellen had a short bow and a machete. I even packed a water canteen, so we should be able to push forward for quite some time.

We didn't really have to look for a water source just to get drinking water, though.

If my predictions were correct, there would be rain tomorrow. According to the original novel, all of Class B's poorly built tents would be blown away, leaving their bodies soaked and making their body temperature drop.

So if we made enough rainwater collectors, we wouldn't have to worry about drinking water soon enough.

However, what I was looking for now was water for use, not drinking water. One could see that everyone was rather stressed out because they couldn't change their clothes. But if we knew of a location with fresh water, they could go there to wash themselves or their clothes, even if we didn't move our camp there.

At this rate, it was highly likely that the others would voluntarily give up one by one because they couldn't endure not being able to wash their clothes. Although I seriously disliked their whining, I did need some of their abilities, so it would be good for me to hang on to them.

Although this uninhabited island was mostly covered in jungle terrain, it had something in the form of a mountain rising up in its middle.

Although it was difficult to see due to the overgrown trees, there was a chance that there were pools of water in the mountain's valley and folds. We determined the valley's location by climbing up a tree.

"I feel terribly tired."

I wondered if it was because of this terrible heat. It felt all around unpleasant just wearing these sweat-soaked clothes on my body, to the point where I wondered if my whole body had become liquid.

"Huff… Huff…"

Ellen was exhausted as well. Her breathing became labored.

"Should we go back?"

She might become even more exhausted if we were to go in even further, so I asked Ellen that, but Ellen just shook her head, although it seemed to be really tough for her.

"I think I can hear the sound of water."

"……Aren't you just hallucinating?"

Of course, I did think she had a much better hearing than me. However, wasn't it just that thing? You know, that thing that would make one mistake, seeing an oasis in the middle of a desert. Something similar to a mirage.

"No… I really think I can hear it."

Ellen just spoke to me as such with a blank expression on her face.

No, come to think of it, I could also strengthen my hearing, right?

I have super hearing.

That was what I was self-suggesting myself with.

Certainly, as I focused completely on my hearing, I felt like I could pick up sounds more precisely. I wonder since when I was able to use these kinds of reinforcements.

I could hear the sound of leaves rustling in the wind, the cries of some unknown insects, and the chirping of birds.

In the midst of all these sounds.

Something like splaaash or gurgle.

I could clearly hear something similar to the sounds water made.

“I can hear it. Over there.“

"Let’s go."

When I finished checking, Ellen took the lead, as if there was nothing else to do anymore.

* * *

According to my settings, there was supposed to be a stream flowing through the valley. The stream, that I presumed to have its source at the top of that mountain, was flowing down as if descending.

It was quite large.

Some places of the stream were quite wide, and, looking into the deep-blue water, quite deep as well.

The flowing water was clear. Not muddy at all.

Originally, drinking this kind of water would kill you. It would be infested with parasites and germs.

However, this wasn’t an authentic jungle. We could drink this water with unknown origins, because it was under strict quality control. They probably used purification magic or whatever.

There were no dangerous beasts around as well.

Ellen carefully approached the pool of water and cautiously scooped up some of it with her hands to moisten her throat.

It must have been incredibly hard on her. This was my first time seeing this kid act so actively. After she drank some of the cold water, even her body trembled as if she had just come back to life.

Of course, I was the same.

“I’m going in.”

-Splash!

I didn’t need anything else and just threw myself into the water.

* * *

Since it was a pretty deep stream, there were places where the water was just as stagnant as the water found in a swimming pool. In a fairly wide part of the stream with a maximum depth of about 3 meters, I was sitting in a somewhat shallow area.

Ellen swam through the water like a seal, diving from time to time.

It didn’t show on her face, but she seemed like she was excited. Because of the clear, blue water, I could see all of Ellen’s enthusiastic swimming movements while she was submerged.

It was like watching a real seal swim at a zoo. Although she was more like a mermaid than that.

Normally, one had to check first if the water was drinkable, but as I already knew that it was, I just filled the empty canteen and drank as much as I could.

“Phew…”

However, would the kids want to come here, even if they knew there was a stream here?

Even if they came here to wash themselves or do their laundry, they would get sweaty again on their way back.

That said, I think they’d get upset as well if we were to move our camp to this place, because it would just be a repeat of yesterday’s hard labor.

Hmm.

Let's leave the decision to Bertus.

Ellen came out of the water after she swam for a while.

She squeezed her hair, looked at me, and pointed down the stream.

"Go over there."

"……Why?"

"I'm going to take all my clothes off."

……*Ah.*

You're that excited, huh?

Of course, she probably did this, not because she wanted to swim naked, but because she wanted to wash her clothes. I also went down the stream and rubbed my clothes under the running water, shook them out, and placed them on some rocks on which the sun was shining.

The sunlight was strong, so they would be bone dry pretty soon. No, they might not dry well because of the moisture, right?

I didn't know what it would be.

-Splash, splash!

I couldn't see her, but I could hear Ellen swimming upstream. It looked like she took turns washing her clothes and herself again. Well, it wouldn't hurt to wash myself once.

Originally, Delphine was supposed to find this stream. Probably not today, though. Of course, the variable Charlotte got thrown into the mix, so I didn't know what would happen.

-Reinhardt!

And suddenly, Ellen called me in a loud voice.

* * *

“Let’s go back.”

Ellen, wearing some clothes that weren’t fully dried yet, had a stiff expression on her face. She felt nervous.

“Why? Did something happen?"

“This place is kind of weird. I don’t think we should stay here.”

Ellen began to point at certain places up- and downstream.

“There are animal bones all over the place.”

“……You’re right.”

If Charlotte is considered a variable that started to stir the original development into a different direction, me bringing Ellen here would also be considered a variable. Ellen didn’t just enjoy the stream; she also noticed some suspicious things and got some clues.

“And over there.”

Ellen pointed to the other side.

There were animal bones as well as traces that were a little different from the others.

“Someone made a fire over there. They shouldn’t be traces left by the teachers. I think this is related to those special conditions…”

Ellen carefully concluded something.

“I don’t think this is a deserted island.”

Someone other than us was living here.

Ellen just took one step closer to the secret hidden on this island.

CHAPTER 98

Seeing the traces of a fire and food, Ellen concluded that there were others living on this island separate from Class A and B.

“Then is this somehow related to those special conditions?”

“That’s right.”

Ellen was a lot more vigilant on our way back. She knew that nothing life-threatening should happen because we were still within the bounds of the mission.

Of course, that didn’t mean there wouldn’t be any emergencies. Ellen vigilantly took the lead while I followed her.

Perhaps because she was smart, she was able to find hints regarding the special condition right away.

Anyway, we were so nervous that we wore our wet clothes and returned to the camp immediately.

This was important information, so Bertus immediately stopped all work and gathered everyone in one place when I reported it to him.

The kids became happy when they heard that we had discovered a stream but looked surprised when we told them that there was someone or something else on this island besides us.

“Wh-what should we do? Are they cannibals?"

“Wha-what are you even saying?!”

As Kono Lint’s face turned pale, fear began to slowly spread among them. It was only natural that everyone’s faces turned completely white.

“The fact that this island isn’t actually uninhabited is probably part of this mission. This must have been planned by Temple. There’s nothing to be scared about; I think

this is related to the special conditions…"

Of course, Bertus stayed calm. Since this was only a mission, he came to the natural conclusion that this situation was a controlled one.

"That means if we find that person that isn't part of our group, we'll be able to finish this mission right away, right?"

"That's what I hope for, but we can't be sure if that's the case."

"I guess so…"

If the presence of this other person besides us had something to do with those clear conditions, the mission would end if we found that person. At Bertus' words, the mood changed drastically.

"Th-then, do we just have to find that person?"

Harriet's mood suddenly became bright.

It was everyone's dearest wish to quickly get out of this environment. Bertus nodded his head as if he understood the feelings behind Harriet's words.

"I don't know that much yet. But it's true that it would probably help us finish the mission early if we were to find that person."

"Then let's search the island! If we find that person first, we can go back!" Cayer shouted—and everyone seemed to agree with him. It was only right to quickly find that mysterious person and put an end to this mission.

"Hmm… That seems to be the right choice, but…"

Bertus pondered while looking at me.

"Reinhardt, what do you think?"

At those words, everyone's eyes focused on me.

I knew that their opinion of me had drastically changed. Those guys—who'd been treating me with indifference before—had become all fussy over whatever I did.

They seemed to think I was something like a vending machine that would spit out the right answers.

Even those guys who hated my guts felt that it was only right to listen to what I had to say for the time being.

But honestly, I didn't want to give them any more hints; it was true that I wanted Class A to get better results than they did in the original novel, but if I were to give them a hint, Class A would win.

To be honest, I wanted Class B to win this mission so that Charlotte's side gained more strength.

"Hmm… I'm not sure, but how about we all go to the stream first?"

I didn't know about any of those complicated things, but my suggestion about going to play in the water was probably the best answer I could give in that situation.

* * *

Ellen was of the opinion that it would be dangerous but failed to convince any of them; the only thing they wanted to focus on was talk of that stream.

It took about 30 minutes for all eleven of us to reach the stream through the route Ellen had laid out.

Everyone was sweaty and exhausted but, spurred on by the hope that they'd be able to wash up at the end of the journey, they kept on following Ellen without complaining.

"Uwaah…"

As soon as we arrived at the stream, their eyes widened. The stream was even bigger than they had imagined.

After a moment of silence, everyone plunged into the stream all at once.

"Urg! It's so cold!"

"Be careful, there are some deep areas in there."

However, those guys who threw themselves into the water didn't seem to hear me.

Ellen also threw herself in again and started splashing around.

She told them not to go there because it was dangerous, but when she laid her eyes on the water again, she seemed to lose all sense of caution.

-Woah!

In a situation where they had felt like they were about to turn into puddles of sweat, those kids immediately began to play in the water like the kids they were as soon as they arrived at the stream; Bertus also jumped in without hesitation, smiling unpretentiously.

Yes, that was what kids should be like.

* * *

The water in the stream was quite deep, so there were some guys who ended up thrashing and squealing after they stepped into deeper places. Of course, Ellen, Bertus, and I—those of us who knew how to swim—fished them out.

There were also times when things got a bit bizarre.

"Nuwoah!"

Kono Lint suddenly appeared outside of the water. Perhaps he had fallen into the deep parts of the stream.

"Kyaaa!"

"Y-you! You crazy bastard!"

"H-hey!"

Naturally, he escaped by teleporting—leaving his clothes in the stream. The female students who saw him screamed, and the male students burst out into laughter when they witnessed that scene.

"U-uwaah! D-don't look!"

“Clothes! Someone bring him some clothes!" Harriet shouted in agitation while covering her eyes with her hands. Bertus giggled after fishing Kono Lint’s clothes out of the water as he handed them to him.

It made sense that he used his teleportation in the face of death, so I put up with it.

Everyone was playing in the same pool as the girls started to chatter among themselves.

“Erm, Bertus.” Harriet called out to Bertus, who was sitting idle in the water as our representative.

“Ah, Saint-Owan, what’s the matter?”

“We’d like to… Erm. Wash up… further upstream…” Harriet mumbled with her face reddened, too embarrassed to say what she meant directly.

Of course, Bertus nodded his head, understanding what she was talking about.

“A-aah. I know what you're trying to say. But are you sure? We don’t know what’s up there…”

It seemed like he fully understood that they wanted to go wash themselves and their clothes. However, Bertus didn’t know what might be up there, so he asked them if it was okay for them to just take their clothes off over there.

“Ellen said she’ll be on the lookout.”

“Then I’m relieved. Okay. I won’t let any of the other guys go up there.”

The other female students along with Harriet began heading upstream to a place that couldn’t be seen by the boys.

“You roughly know what they are doing, right?” Bertus announced as if he didn’t want to explain it with his own mouth. Everyone nodded quietly, becoming a little shy.

Just thinking about their female classmates being naked up there seemed to make their hearts flutter.

It wasn't hard to read that they were imagining things they shouldn't imagine. Were they all lewd devils? These kids.

Kono Lint stared at the female students going up with a sullen expression.

He seemed to think about using his teleportation to peep on them.

"Don't even think about doing something so useless. You'd be caught right away."

"W-who said I'd do something?"

At my warning, Kono Lint shook his head violently.

Of course, they eventually forgot about these things, washed their clothes, hung them on rocks, and started playing in the water again.

It didn't really matter because the two places were so far apart that one couldn't see the place upstream from below or the place downstream from up top.

The biggest pain in the ass was Kono Lint.

"Look!"

-*Pat!*

When there were only men around, he started to play around with his teleportation. He suddenly teleported to the water's surface after diving in and did some bizarre things.

"Water Walking!"

-*Papapapapat!*

Kono could teleport continuously, the only problem his power had was the fact that his clothes would come off. His activation speed and control were actually top-notch. However, he was a pitiful fellow whose true worth only came to the surface after giving up all his dignity as a human being.

Bertus took off his clothes as well. It wasn't that unusual for us to see each others' naked bodies because we'd often see them when we used the shower rooms after

P.E.

“Hmm… There’s definitely something over there.”

Bertus seemed convinced that the island wasn’t so uninhabited after seeing the traces of meals being eaten—including the hardly visible bones of animals. Bertus looked at me as I was just sitting around idly.

“Would it be too risky to move our camp here?” he asked.

“Well, it has its merits and demerits. It would be good to find that person, but wild animals might appear quite frequently.”

Bertus nodded at my explanation. Since the stream was filled with plenty of drinking water, it would be good to set up our camp there—and we might also be able to find that other person.

However, we wouldn’t know what kinds of threats would await us at night. We would also have to throw away the camp we’d already built up.

“Let’s talk about that with everyone else later."

Bertus put this decision off for now.

After some time…

After we finished washing up and drying our clothes, we regrouped again. The female students, obviously, had a much more cheerful expression adorning their faces.

Harriet was smiling for the first time ever since we had arrived at the island.

I thought it was good seeing her mood improve some.

“Everyone is of the opinion that this would be a good place to set up our camp, right?”

Everyone nodded at Bertus' words.

“Let’s think about whether we want to make another camp here or go back to our old

camp.”

“I don’t think we can make one here.”

Liana, who seemed to have something to say about this, shook her head. The other female students did the same. Except for Ellen, all of them looked a bit exhausted.

“A snake came out… Up there.”

“This one.”

Ellen held up a fairly big, dead snake—stabbed through its head with a javelin.

Snake.

With the single mention of that word, it was unanimously decided that we’d withdraw from the stream.

* * *

After we returned to our camp, everyone let out a sigh again. Still, one couldn’t say that we hadn't achieved anything that day—we were able to refill our water canteens, after all.

Of course, they drank as much as they could from the canteens. However, we filled up the large pot with water so we wouldn’t have to worry about it for a while.

“Should we rest today?"

Bertus came to me to speak as the sun was beginning to set. If we were to sweat again, what we had done just then would become useless.

"How about we take a break after we finish the camp?”

However, I disagreed; we weren’t done making the wooden flooring for the tents yet.

At my words, everyone glared at me with daggers in their eyes. They wanted to rest, but I criticized them, asking them to work more.

“No, I just think that it’s only appropriate that we finish what we started first.”

You punks.

Get ready to bow down to me tomorrow.

* * *

After working on our camp, Harriet cast underwater breathing magic on Ellen and me before we went hunting for our dinner.

Just walking underwater with that magic cast on us was amazing, even if we weren't hunting.

Ellen was probably thinking similarly to me, as she stopped sometimes to admire the little fish moving through the coral reefs.

Ellen looked at the small yellow fish that were biting her finger as she reached out for them. While I was watching that scene, Ellen met my eyes.

-…

-…

We weren't able to speak while underwater, but we could tell what we felt at the moment just by looking at each others' faces.

Ellen's black hair that moved with the flow of water was quite impressive.

Our harvest was three lobsters and two large fish that resembled snappers—they were so large that it seemed like we could feed all eleven of us with just those.

After leaving the water, completely drenched once again, we stood on the beach and watched the sunset. Ellen didn't follow me back to the camp.

When I looked back, I saw Ellen still staring at the flaming sunset.

"What are you doing? Aren't you coming?"

"Yes."

Ellen stopped admiring the scenery after I called out to her and walked towards me

with her back to the setting sun.

I wasn't able to see what kind of expression she wore with the light shining from behind her.

"I think this is fun."

Perhaps she was smiling.

CHAPTER 99

We cut the logs in half and stuck them together to form rectangular floorings. Next, we put the prepared huts on top of the flooring.

We finished another hut that day, so we had as many huts as there were people. The children acquiesced to securing every hut by using vines to tie them to logs in order to prevent them from getting blown away by the wind, as I requested.

If we'd left them as is, they'd be carried away and smashed by the rain the next day.

Like we had done the previous day, we kept watch at night.

Thanks to the wooden flooring, everyone seemed to feel a little better than the day before. Of course, most of them kind of felt ashamed of themselves for feeling good about having a better place to sleep in this situation.

All of us were thoroughly exhausted, so no matter what kind of accommodation they had, everyone just fell asleep right away, as did I.

* * *

A dark night.

-Shaaaaaa…

The sound of rain.

-Rumble! Ruuumble!

Lightning.

-Woooosh!

Wind.

Because of the heavy rainfall and the wind blowing through the hut, I couldn't help

but wake up.

It was impossible to build a completely water and wind-proofed hut in the situation we had found ourselves in.

“What?! Rain!”

One or two people began shouting like that inside their huts. It was impossible for anyone to sleep comfortably in that chaos. Dark clouds covered the sky, the bonfire got extinguished, and our view was completely dyed in darkness.

The flashes of lightning that flickered across the sky from time to time was the only thing that allowed us to see our surroundings.

A storm was coming.

-Don’t go outside! Stay inside for now!

It was Bertus who shouted that.

It was raining, so it was only natural that one would get wet as soon as they left their hut. It was best to just stay inside where one was slightly more protected from the rain and wind. We probably couldn’t go back to sleep, so our only option was to hold on until the sun rose and the rain let up.

If we were to go out now, the only thing that would happen was that our body temperature would drop rapidly due to the cold rain and wind.

-I-it’s about to be blown away!

However, it seemed like some huts were still about to break—even after we firmly fixed all of them to the ground.

-If it gets smashed, go to another one immediately!

Even in that situation, Bertus calmly gave instructions to the confused and scared children. If we hadn’t reinforced the floor with the wooden flooring, we’d had have been laying in wet sand by then.

-*Crack!*

In the end, the hut couldn't win against the strong wind. I could hear the sound of someone's hut breaking.

-Kyaa!

That was Harriet's scream.

-I-I can't see anything! What do I do?!

In that deep darkness, Harriet seemed to panic. It would be good if she could use something like light magic, but there was no way that she was able to calmly use her magic in her situation.

-I-I can't see anything! What do I do! I feel like I'm about to be blown away!

-Saint-Owan! Go into another hut!

-I-I can't, I can't see anything!

-*Flash!*

There was a single flash of lightning. At that moment, I left my hut after I located Harriet through the flashing lightning. I found her lying on the floor, fumbling around.

"W-who…?"

She seemed to feel some relief as well as fear when she felt someone grabbing her in the dark. I traced my steps back through the darkness and returned to my hut, all while dragging Harriet with me.

"Calm down, idiot."

"R-Reinhardt?"

It was kind of funny and sad that she was able to tell that it was me in the chaos just because I called her an idiot.

After I called her 'idiot', she immediately felt relieved.

“Bertus! I have her!”

-Alright, Reinhardt! Good job!

“Calm down. It’s just raining.”

I slowly patted Harriet’s back. She was drenched in rainwater, trembling in fear.

“The rain will stop. You know that much already, right?”

Aside from simply feeling scared, she was also trembling because of the cold.

“Use heat magic or whatever to maintain your body temperature. If you do that, this’ll be nothing.”

“O-okay…”

It seemed like she was trying to calm herself by taking deep breaths as I talked to her.

-*Ruuuuumble!*

“Hieek!”

However, it didn’t seem to be easy for her to calm down with strong wind and thunder constantly echoing through the area.

Before she could even adapt to the unfamiliar environment, she was faced with the worst possible situation that could occur in that place. She couldn’t calm down easily.

The huts creaked, and it seemed like a few more got smashed. Children were screaming, and I could see some trying to fix the huts.

“I’m scared…”

Because it was too dark, I couldn’t see what kind of expression Harriet was making, but I could definitely feel that she was shaking. I wondered if my patting on her back had helped because she was soon calm enough to cast magic.

Perhaps she cast something like thermal magic, as a shining yellow sphere appeared

in the hut that spread warmth around it.

“Okay, well done.”

“Yes.”

The brightness of the sphere’s light was rather weak, but it was enough to barely discern our surroundings. Although there was strong, cold wind blowing outside, the sphere had a similar effect to a small bonfire placed inside the hut.

Harriet gradually calmed her heart and began to summon more spheres of light, this time placing them into the other huts.

“You…”

“…What?”

I didn’t know she’d do something like that, so let’s say I was slightly surprised. Harriet looked at me as if she was doing something wrong.

“…Nothing. Continue.”

In times of crisis, we had to help each other.

It was a simple concept, but it made me feel quite strange seeing Harriet act on it. Did she think that it was only natural to help out the others, as she also received help? She wasn’t supposed to be that kind of character.

Fortunately, the spheres of light Harriet summoned seemed to successfully quell everyone’s anxiety.

-Ruuuumble!

“Good job.”

“…Yes.”

A storm was raging outside.

It would be difficult to fall asleep again, but at least it didn’t feel cold anymore.

* * *

The storm that had been raging on throughout the night let up in the morning.

Of course, the rain didn't completely stop. It was still raining cats and dogs. It was close to a torrential downpour. Waves were thrashing about wildly, crashing onto the beach. Looking into the distance one could see overwhelming waves jumping up and crashing down.

No matter if we had underwater breathing magic cast on us or not, going out into the sea when it was in such a state would be suicide.

It was morning, so our view became a bit clearer. It would be best to avoid going out until the rain stopped, but the rain would continue until nightfall. If we stayed like this, we would not only be unable to act that day, but we wouldn't be able to do anything until the next morning.

Securing drinking water wasn't a problem but securing food was.

"W-where are you going?"

As I scrambled to get up, Harriet looked at me, perplexed. She seemed exhausted from summoning heating spheres all night long. She must have been the most exhausted out of all of us.

"I have to do something. Go rest."

"…"

As I walked out into the pouring rain, Bertus, who had already come out before me, looked at me, a hand raised in greeting.

"It's a mess."

"I know."

I didn't know if it was really necessary to come out, but it seemed like Bertus had been checking the three smashed huts all night. He probably tried to make sure that all of us were safe.

“Reinhardt, there’s a problem.”

“A problem?”

Bertus’ expression hardened.

“Cayer is gone.”

Originally, all of Class A except Ellen should have given up at that point.

So the things that normally should have happened to Class B instead started happening to Class A.

* * *

Cayer Vioden was gone. Bertus was trying to figure out the situation.

“It’s strange. Normally, the one standing guard was supposed to wake up everyone else in case of rain… Why didn’t he do that?”

Cayer’s turn was before mine; he was supposed to wake everyone else if he noticed a storm was brewing so that we could prepare for it, but he didn’t.

"Erich, who was standing watch before Cayer, said that he woke him up, and he said that he went back to sleep as soon as he saw him take up the post…”

"He didn’t wake me up."

Cayer didn’t come to wake me up. We all just got woken up by the storm’s sounds.

"Something happened to Cayer while he was on night watch… At least that’s what I think.”

So, before he was able to wake me up, something happened to Cayer, and he went missing.

“There’s the possibility that something happened to Cayer and he gave up voluntarily, or maybe this situation in itself is part of the mission, or he might have accidentally run into the jungle and gotten lost… It’s complicated.”

Bertus nodded his head at my guesses.

“Are you sure that this might be part of the mission?”

“I mean, wouldn’t that make the most sense?”

“Well…”

It seemed like Bertus needed certainty. I wasn’t sure if Cayer gave up, wandered into the jungle, or what really happened. We didn’t know if the situation was controlled or if Cayer’s life was in danger.

But the teachers wouldn’t give us any further hints.

Everything had to be resolved with our own judgment.

Whether we searched for Cayer, gave up, or uncovered the truth, it was our choice.

“We have three strong possibilities at the moment…”

Bertus continued his calm speech in this heavy rain.

“Number one: Cayer went into the jungle in the middle of the night for some reason. If he went there to do his business, it would make sense. And while he was at it, the storm started—leading him to get lost after wandering around the jungle.”

“Number two: the other people on this island kidnapped or harmed Cayer in some way. If that is the case, there is a high possibility that Cayer gave up or was eliminated. You said that these others were part of the mission, so this situation was under the teacher’s control.”

“Number three: class B kidnapped Cayer or something like that.”

Bertus considered a possibility I would never have thought of. Bertus suspected Class B.

“Class B? Why?”

“The only way to complete this mission is to hold on until Sunday. However, that’s not the only way to win.”

Surviving until Sunday was the clear condition for this mission, but that wasn't the way to win it.

After all, this was a cooperative as well as a competitive mission.

Bertus considered all possibilities, which involved being suspicious of one's competitors.

"There are different ways to win this mission other than meeting the special conditions."

I understood what Bertus was trying to say.

"If one made one's opponents give up, one could win just by holding on until Friday."

Bertus already thought of other methods of winning in the mission that even I, the writer, hadn't thought of.

He truly was an incredible kid. Of course, Bertus also knew that it was unlikely. However, he thought that there was no way that Charlotte couldn't come up with something like that. Although the possibility of her using such a radical method was low, it seemed like he judged that it still was a possibility.

Therefore, he asked me to go check on how Class B was doing as a form of reconnaissance. I was the only one among the students of Class A who had frequent contact with Class B, so he said it wouldn't be all that suspicious.

He also told me to take care of issues such as sharing our situation at my own discretion.

* * *

After the heavy rain let up a bit more, I went to Class B's camp—it was a mess.

All their huts were destroyed to the point where they couldn't be salvaged anymore, and everyone had left the camp. If I hadn't known that there would be a storm of that level and gotten Class A to reinforce their huts, we would have been in a similar state.

Class B decided to check the situation as soon as the rain let up and abandoned the

camp for the moment. It would have been impossible for them to salvage the situation at the moment, as everything had happened in the middle of the night.

They probably gathered under a big tree somewhere in the jungle.

“Charlotte! Ludwig! Delphine!”

I went into the jungle and randomly called for Charlotte and Ludwig. After walking for a short amount of time, Ludwig appeared from behind a large tree.

“Reinhardt!”

“Oh! Are you okay?”

As I approached, Ludwig came over to me through the rain with a welcome expression on his face.

“Phew, this sure is one hell of a mess."

“Are you all gathered over there?”

“Oh. That’s right, but everyone’s condition isn’t all that good.”

As I followed behind Ludwig, I could see Class B’s students all huddled under a large tree, trying to take shelter from the rain.

Fortunately, there was a single light sphere floating amongst them—although it was a bit different from the ones Harriet summoned, it still emitted warmth, so they were only barely able to hold on.

At that moment, I understood that the guy named Ashir, who had divine powers, had used his divine power to summon that sphere which could give a minimal amount of warmth.

“Reinhardt.”

Charlotte, who had been sitting completely still, got up, pulled at me, and sat me down near the sphere of light.

“What? Did you come here to spy on us?"

As if doubtful of my intentions, Charlotte continued to smile helplessly even in this dire situation.

“I can’t say that it’s not like that. The situation sure doesn’t look very good.”

“It certainly doesn’t; that storm was like a bolt out of the blue last night.”

I could see that everyone in Class B was trembling. Ashir looked overwhelmed just by having to maintain his divine magic.

“How’s the situation over there?”

“Some of our camp got destroyed as well, but not as much as yours. Still, things are very bad.”

Charlotte just said, “Is that so?” to my words and nodded her head. I counted their members and finished assessing the situation.

“Doesn’t it seem like someone is missing?”

Everyone’s expression slightly hardened at my words. There weren’t as many people in Class B I really knew, so it was pretty obvious.

“Louis Ankton, did he go missing as well?”

Hearing what I said, Charlotte’s expression changed.

“What? Is it the same for your side?… What happened?”

“Yeah, we lost Cayer.”

Those disappearances weren’t restricted to just one side.

It happened to both classes. In the original, it was Lanian Sessor who was supposed to disappear. Only, that part changed slightly.

And that was how the possibility Bertus suggested, that Class B had something to do with it, disappeared. Class B would go out to search for Louis Ankton as soon as the rain stopped.

“I can’t tell you a lot of things in my position,” I said while looking at Charlotte.

One student from both Class A and B went missing. With these clues alone, Charlotte should have been able to deduce many things.

“But there’s a stream running from the mountain. You’ll find it if you go in that direction. The water’s drinkable. I found it yesterday.”

“Drinkable water?”

“Yeah.”

Everyone’s expressions changed at those words. It was true water was literally dropping from the sky, but the location of a water source was still very important information. Charlotte’s expression turned a bit complicated when she saw me give out that information for free.

“Be careful, Charlotte."

“Yes, thank you, Reinhardt. Be careful as well.”

Charlotte watched me for some distance as I returned to Class A’s camp.

CHAPTER 100

“Class B also has someone missing…”

Hearing my report, Bertus nodded slowly.

“It would be a bit unreasonable to say that one person from each class suddenly wandered into the jungle and got lost at the same time.”

In the end, Bertus decided that it was only right to look for those other people on the island.

“Our side is also a mess, but I didn’t think that we’d actually had it better…”

Bertus couldn’t hide his laughter when I told him that Class B’s camp was completely ruined. Although we had suffered, we had it a lot better.

“Okay. So someone attacked us, and we have to catch that person whether we like it or not. Maybe that’s the specific condition the teachers mentioned. That being what it is, we still have to gather food to keep going.”

The first objective was searching for the culprits, and the second was to find food. It was already hard enough to do just one, but suddenly I had to work on both tasks at the same time.

“Reinhardt, Cliffman, Ellen, Grantz, and I are probably the only ones who are able to fight properly in an emergency situation…”

Harriet’s magic required casting time, and Adelia didn’t learn any attack spells. In Heinrich’s case, he wasn’t ready yet to attack with his ability. In Kono Lint’s and Erich’s cases, they weren’t on a level where they could fight properly either.

So there were actually only five people who had actual combat abilities; we also had no way of reliably knowing what kind of opponent we’d be facing.

“Among us, Ellen is the only one that can act alone, right?”

“Probably.”

“Okay, fortunately, we have Heinrich, who can light fires even during this rain, so it won’t be difficult to cook whatever we catch. If we don’t find anything, we will have to eat coconuts."

Bertus went towards the camp.

“Okay! Although it might be a bit hard because it’s raining, please come out, everyone!” he shouted loudly.

Everyone started crawling out of their huts like beggars at Bertus’s call.

Cayer had disappeared, so there were only 10 people left. Everyone was wet from the rain and—after the storm had hit us—none of us could sleep anymore, so everyone looked extremely tired.

* * *

Bertus explained to them what we talked about step by step.

Cayer Vioden was missing. There was also someone missing from Class B’s side.

It looked like the two of them had been kidnapped by the other inhabitants of the island, who might hunt us every night or target those who entered the jungle alone.

We had to find and subdue them before any more of us got caught by the inhabitants. Otherwise, we’d get completely destroyed, and both our classes would fail the mission.

“From this point on, Reinhardt, Ellen, Grantz, Cliffman, and I will be divided into three groups to search through and hunt in the jungle. Those remaining should organize the camp and repair the damaged huts. And, if you could, make some rainwater collectors; make as many as possible so that we can secure enough drinking water, but don’t go too deep into the jungle. I don’t know what might happen.”

After instructing the remaining people on what to do, Bertus gathered the ones that were selected to go into the jungle.

"Ellen, I think you should go in alone. Are you okay with that? If you think it's dangerous, you can move with others as a three-person team."

"I'll go alone."

Ellen took a shortbow, some arrows, and a knife. That was enough.

"Okay, Cliffman, you'll go with me."

"Yes."

"Grantz, you'll move with Reinhardt."

"Okay."

Like that, we managed to organize three groups.

"Don't just try to subdue the inhabitants as you come across them. Please try to first check what type of people they are, if possible, then come back. We'll make a plan together then. For now, our top priority is securing food."

Everyone nodded at Bertus's words.

"Let's go in."

-*Shaaaaaaaaa!*

Accompanied by the heavy rain, we entered the jungle.

* * *

Liana was a bit different from the other Class A students who entered the jungle.

She was a supernatural power user. Of course, I was also one, but my talent was actually closer to a combat talent.

"Huff… Huff…"

That was why Liana had much less stamina than the other guys, and she was really suffering from the drop in her body temperature due to the rain. The sphere Harriet

attached to her had also disappeared, so she was struggling to move through the rain.

“…Should we go back?”

“No, just keep going.”

This girl was completely exhausted, but she still walked ahead with her eyes squinted, seeming as if she didn’t want to be a burden. I could feel that my stamina had increased tremendously, but I also noticed that this girl had incredibly little stamina.

Of course, in a combat situation, her Electrokinesis would be much more useful than my abilities.

After walking for a while, we had no other choice but to stop.

“We can’t go on like this. Get some rest."

“Huff… Huff…”

As if she had no more energy left to speak, she just sat down and leaned her back against a tree. Her lips turned blue, and her body temperature seemed to have dropped drastically.

“Is your condition worse? I think we should go back now.”

Liana struggled to raise her hand instead of giving me a response.

“Give me that."

“That? Erm, Ah… You mean this?”

“Yeah, that.”

Liana grabbed the machete I held in my hand and suddenly began to focus her strength in her eyes.

-Crackle!

Raindrops began to evaporate as soon as they touched the machete. It seemed like she was heating it up by applying electricity to it; she let it cool down slightly using the rain and then hugged it like a hot pack. It looked like she already knew how to attach her power to things.

“I want to burn it all down."

Liana was muttering nervously—it seemed like she didn’t like roaming through the jungle in such conditions. Of course, who the hell would?

After doing that for some time, Liana’s complexion turned back to normal. She then handed the machete back to me.

“You do it too.”

The machete was heated to a somewhat hot level.

“Uh, Uhm… Okay.”

The more time I spent with her, the more she seemed like a kind weirdo—rather than just kind.

* * *

Due to Liana having a low level of stamina, our progress was a lot slower compared to the other teams—we had to take a lot of breaks. She would hug the machete hot pack to recover her body temperature; then we’d move forward again.

“But what if we get lost while we’re searching around? No, aren’t we actually already lost?”

The rain was very heavy, so Liana seemed to have already lost her sense of direction. I pointed to the sky.

“We can climb up a tree to check.”

“Ah.”

It would be enough to just climb up on a tree, and then we could figure out our approximate location. Like that, we could find our way if we ever got lost. If one still

didn’t know where one was, one just had to look towards the ocean to find the direction of the closest beach and go around to our camp. As if she was satisfied with that answer, Liana just hugged the machete like a doll.

“But how are we even supposed to find any animals to hunt in this heavy rain…” Liana grumbled, then her eyes suddenly became wide.

“…Isn’t that one?"

As I looked towards the place Liana was pointing at, I could see a roe deer drinking rainwater from a puddle.

I made a shushing gesture, to which Liana nodded with a firm expression on her face.

It hadn’t noticed us yet.

* * *

The distance between us and it was about 15 meters, which was too far for Liana’s ability to reach. I had a javelin, but I wasn’t familiar with using them. Even with the support of my supernatural power, could I even graze it?

‘Let’s get close to it slowly.'

Liana silently nodded her head when she heard my words. Fortunately, the deer didn’t notice the sound of our footsteps because of the heavy rain.

After slowly moving five meters closer to it, we were able to reduce the gap to about 10 meters. At this distance, I thought I’d be able to hit it well enough.

But if I can’t kill it in a single blow, it would just run away.

What should I do?

I only had one javelin, only one chance. I took it out and showed it to Liana.

Was this possible?

-Can you leave electric energy in there?

A while ago, I found out that it was possible for her to attach electric energy to metallic objects, but was she able to make electric energy remain in an object? Under normal circumstances, that would be impossible, but she already knew how to attach her ability to objects.

To put it simply, I wanted her to put an electric enchantment on my weapon.

-Uhm, I think I can do that.

Liana concentrated and began to attach her electric energy to my javelin's tip.

And.

-*Brzzzt!*

"Ugrrrrr!"

"Oh, right."

Of course, Liana and I both forgot that if she were to let electric currents run through a rain-soaked javelin, my hand would also get electrocuted while holding it.

* * *

Fortunately, I didn't die.

However, the roe deer naturally ran away, surprised by my loud scream after I got electrocuted.

Ditzy and stupid.

Both of us just stood there in the rain staring blankly into the distance, ashamed at how we stupidly lost that deer.

"Hey, even if I asked you to do that, you're electrokinetic. Shouldn't you have known what would happen?"

Liana glared at me with her eyes wide open.

"And you won first place with such an empty head."

“Did you just call my head empty?”

“Be glad that I didn’t call you stone-headed. Oh, but it would have been better if your head was made of stone, then you wouldn’t have gotten electrocuted. You’re an electricity conducting empty head.”

She was way different from Harriet.

She was not one to lose in a fight of words; even beyond that, she didn’t get affected at all and even dealt out quite a bit. If I argued with her anymore, I think we might have ended up at each other’s throats, so I decided to be more lenient.

“…Fine, I lost. Let’s stop this.”

“Okay.”

Hunting using Electrokinesis? It seemed like we wanted to die of a heart attack.

Anyway, both of us got overly excited about finding prey that we couldn’t think clearly. Thinking back, even I thought that asking for a Lightning enchantment on a rainy day made me seem just as bad as Ludwig.

The same goes for lashing out at the kid whom I asked to do it.

“Sigh. Let’s look for it."

“I think it already ran away.”

We resumed walking in the direction the roe fled to. The ground was muddy because of the continued heavy rainfall, so there weren’t a lot of traces to follow. Neither of us had any tracking talents nor any other related skills. Just because I watched Law of the Jungle or Bear Grylls videos a few times didn’t mean I perfectly knew how to track animals.

We had no other choice but to walk around randomly.

“It couldn’t have gone far…”

“Shh. ”

Fortunately, the roe deer didn't run that far. After walking around for about 10 minutes, I could see some grass shaking in the distance.

-Rustle!

The bushes were shaking quite unnaturally. I wasn't sure if it was the roe deer or something else, but there definitely was something over there. Liana and I slowly approached the place while keeping completely silent. I prepared my javelin so that I could react at any time.

-Groooowl!

Then we heard a clear, low-pitched growl that made our muscles stiffen.

It was an animal.

What we were able to see when we got closer was a jaguar that had hunted down the roe deer we were chasing, giving us a warning growl.

"!"

When Liana saw the beast, she froze up.

I wasn't much different, though. Just looking at that beast—which wasn't even an actual monster or something—I felt my whole body growing weak.

What was with this? Crazy.

This didn't come up in the original novel.

I mean, they did exist in the original, but they shouldn't be found here.

I grabbed the stiffened Liana's arm and slowly backed away from it.

The jaguar that spotted us would run after us at full speed if we were to get even a little closer. I didn't know if I was able to react to the speed and agility of a wild cat-like predator.

Liana looked at me and tried to call out to me by only moving her mouth without letting out a sound.

-Why is something like this here?!

-Because it is.

Questioning how there could be a mission like this out there, Liana seemed to be on the verge of delirium while I was trying to calmly lead her to back up.

It caught its prey, so it probably wouldn't try to chase after us.

We had two options.

-Let's choose whether we drive it away, kill it to take away its prey, or retreat as is.

-Is that even something we had to consider?

It seemed like Liana was swearing me out just with her eyes. Her eyes seemed to ask me if I had gone mad.

-It's possible to chase it away with the javelin like before, using electricity.

-… Is your head really made out of stone? Did you forget that you got electrocuted last time?

It seemed like Liana was now actually worried if my brain had some serious defects or not.

-I'm not throwing it, but you are.

Of course, I didn't forget that I got shocked before when trying to throw an electricity-enchanted javelin.

However, I wasn't the only one able to throw it—that girl was immune to electricity after all…

-Me? You want me to throw the javelin and hit that thing? You think that'll work?

-Who told you that you have to hit it?

I pointed towards the bush the beast was in.

-There's a puddle over there. You just have to throw it in there.

Because of the rain falling, the puddle was almost overflowing, and the place where the jaguar caught the deer was clearly in the water.

It was only then that Liana seemed to understand what I was going on about.

-What if it dodges? Won't it attack us?

-If that thing comes at us, I'll do something about it.

-What do you mean 'you'll do something'?

-Anyway, you'll be able to do it well, so just do it.

My physical abilities might not have been on par with a wild beast, but if it was a jaguar rushing straight at us, it would come into Liana's range. Rather, if I were to aggro it and kite it for a while, Liana could attack it with her electric shock.

This mission wasn't supposed to be life-threatening, but we were able to do whatever we wanted.

Liana seemed worried, but she eventually grabbed the javelin…

After I got further away to avoid getting electrocuted, Liana threw the javelin with all her might with an unsure look on her face.

And.

-*Pak!*

*"…*Ah."

"…How does this even happen?"

It was a fairly large puddle; however, the javelin was horizontally embedded in a tree in the area.

She had not only missed it completely, it seemed like she had aimed at a completely different place.

-Snaaarl!

The jaguar sensed our intent and ran towards us.

“Wha-what should we do!”

“What do you mean what should we do?!”

I picked up my machete and aimed at the rushing jaguar. The speed of the beast’s charge was unbelievably fast. So fast one couldn’t even follow it with one’s naked eyes.

If I tried to stab it, it would just evade it—so I grabbed the blade of the machete and held it horizontally.

It was the half-swording style Ellen had occasionally shown me.

Rather than attacking it, it would be better to block it; my purpose wasn’t to kill it but to stop its charge.

“Just shoot at it!”

Self-suggestion.

I didn’t use it to enhance my physical strength that time.

I told myself that my body had become an insulator!

-Kakang!

Just as the jaguar bit into my horizontally held machete, ice blue sparks flew around Liana’s eyes.

-Snaaarl!

“Uurrg!”

I felt a throbbing pain run through my body as if the electric current was forcing my muscles to continuously relax and contract.

The jaguar that pounced at me staggered. I didn't miss that chance.

I forced my stunned body to move and rushed towards the jaguar.

-*Crack!*

I slammed the machete right into its head. Rather than the sensation of cutting something, the sensation of crushing something got transmitted to my hands.

"Gasp… Gasp…"

The battle didn't even last 5 seconds.

However, Liana sure could activate her ability quickly.

If we both weren't able to activate our abilities so fast, the situation would have ended very differently.

"Are… Are you okay?"

"Phew…"

I looked at Liana and grinned.

"Sometimes, you just gotta get electrocuted a bit to get rid of all the parasites on your body."

"Wha… What are you even saying?"

Hearing my ridiculous bullshit, Liana was genuinely worried that I had lost my mind after getting electrocuted twice in a row.

Damn.

I was amazed that I was able to react properly when that beast had rushed towards me.

Had I made a mistake, I would have gotten eliminated.

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